

[Lunt George]







EASTFORD;

OR,

HOUSEHOLD SKETCHES.

BY

WESLEY BROOKE.

However virtuous the present age, there may be still growing employment
for ridicule or reproof, for persuasion or satire. — GOLDSMITH.

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COURTEOUS READER : This book is an offer to present some of the manifestations of common New England life and character, truly. Of course, its foundation is fact. Perhaps the work has other objects also, which, I trust, you will find it not difficult to discover. In certain of its extraordinary aspects ; in many of its lower developments ; and, occasionally, through a highly romantic medium, we have seen whatever is striking in our generally somewhat homely character, admirably portrayed. We may doubt, however, if much correct notion of the home-life of New England, at least that of another day, can be derived from many of these excellent productions. Of one thing be certain, — there is no humbug in the whole course of these pages. Whatever is valuable (if anything) about the book, I trust, is intrinsically such. At all events, I am content to leave this entirely to your taste and judgment. Nor, as I believe, does the book contain, or countenance, a solitary “ism,” to beguile the easily-deluded public ; or any of those morbid extravagances, which often leave behind them the bitter fruits of disgust and contempt, and reflect their mischievous consequences upon whatever is really sound and wholesome in literature.

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No ; if you like humbug ; if you have a proclivity to cant, in any of its diversified but convergent varieties ; if you are given to devour works of a highly flashy and trashy description, you will not like this book. In a word, if you do not honestly value, admire and honor virtue and religion, and a very useful but homely characteristic, formerly known as common-sense,— why, then,— however much you may really need lessons on these important subjects,— this particular book cannot suit your idiosyncrasies, and, perhaps, you had best lay it aside at once.

In fact, if these are your absolute tendencies, be sure, the book is not written for you ; but rather to encourage and gratify those who are of a different way of thinking and feeling.

W. B.

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

“And nothing is, but what is not.”—MACBETH.

OTHER periods of the world in which we live have obtained, by common consent, some distinguishing appellation, correspondent with their real or supposed characteristics. For example, there are “The Golden Age,” and “The Dark Ages;” which latter, perhaps, after all, were not so very much unlike the veritable *Saturnia regna*, and that awakening era, in which the identity of time itself seems almost to melt away into the blazing lustre, which illuminates “The Revival of Letters.”

We are disposed, therefore, to offer a name also for our own day, which at least is legitimately English, if not peculiarly elegant, and possesses the advantage of being, at the same time, descriptive, appropriate and significant. O, reader! this age of ours is the “Age of Twaddle.” We know what you will say,—that it is really the “Age of Pretension,” or, perhaps, that of “Mediocrity.” But, although each of these forms of definition equally indicates one or more of the current phases of society, still we are fortunate enough to escape any partial view of the subject, by the selection of an epithet so happy, as to include all the others within its own broad and untranslatable expression.

Indeed, in our time, when the enlightened and judicious public is ready not merely to endure, but absolutely grows

enthusiastic over extravagances which are exciting only because they are unnatural, and insipidities which are pronounced good merely for the negative reason that there is no particular harm in them, — the slight tendency to confusion of mental and moral perceptions, which this state of things implies, might, perhaps, in some moods, have given occasion of discouragement to our own more modest lucubrations! But shrewdly reflecting that the *twaddlers* are, after all, the most profoundly unconscious of their own absurdities, we again take courage, and proceed with new vigor to the accomplishment of the purposes we have in hand.

We profess to write for those who think, — and such we hope there are; and, of course, no reader of our own pages could be properly classed with that forlorn category of diluted elements, which an unshaken devotion to truth itself has made us indicate, as conveying a lively description of the peculiarities of the times. And we have little doubt that the epithet by which we have chosen to designate shortcomings, by us sincerely deplored, will be considered quite unhandsome by many, who so often pronounce this era of ours “the most wonderful,” “the most enlightened,” and, indeed, on all accounts, “the greatest of all ages,” which the revolution of centuries has yet been able to unfold.

But what, after all, can be said in favor of an age, the best intellectual energies of which are devoted mainly to the betterment of our material welfare; which pampers the senses at the expense of the moral perceptions, and cherishes the body instead of the superior nature of which it is the instrument; whose virtues, whatever they may be, certainly are not heroic; which descends rather than soars; which unblushingly announces itself as “mechanical;” which admires the dwarfish proportions of its own petty inanity; which flings a veil over those nobler sensibilities and affections, which alone have made men illustrious and life honorable; which weighs love by money, and fights battles for gain; which counts

that glory nothing, which cannot be counted substantially; and to which "honor comes unlooked for," if it come at all; and, jealous of aspirations it is unable to feel or understand, like an oracle, solemn only by reason of its mysterious dulness, shamelessly and boastingly proclaims that the "age of sophists, economists and calculators has succeeded," and the day of poetry has gone by?

For, let the twaddlers say what they will, an admission to this extent is tantamount to giving up the whole question of the moral improvement of the race. Just so far as society becomes callous to the generous impressions of tenderness and honor, it is no longer on the way of any rational and true progress. It recedes instead of advancing. Its bleared and narrow eyes look downward, not upwards. Its frame is of brass and its soul iron. To be mechanical is to be no doubt useful, but the utility is of an inferior, not of an elevated character. The multiplication of spindles has no natural tendency, we conceive, to make men better; probably, though not necessarily, it may make them worse; for the psalm-singing weaver cultivated, as he sang at his solitary loom, those natural and happy emotions, which would be incongruous and incapable of indulgence amidst the busy whirl of a thousand spinning-jennies.

And though we should be sorry to be thought capable of urging serious objections to that somewhat reckless and murderous march of mind, which has developed itself in the enterprise of railroads, provided they be kept strictly on the business lines of communication, and are permitted neither to disturb the visions of present or future Wordsworths, nor to cheat those, who really value such things, out of every sweet secluded spot, and all gentle privacy and rational enjoyment; yet we have many doubts, whether this rapid and popular mode of locomotion has not tended, and does not still tend, to the deterioration of the race.

Indeed, the brilliancy of these experiments hardly repays

us for the danger to our necks ; and having recently undertaken a journey, entirely on our own affairs, in the famous "HELTER-SKELTER-AIR-LINE," and having been whirled off the track and hurled down an embankment into a ditch, finding ourselves there in a sort of "Where are you?" condition, our mind naturally reverted to a former mode of travel, which, if less speedy, usually terminated in a manner far more satisfactory.

In the mean time, we have exchanged that spirited, sensitive, and intelligent companion and helper of human fortunes, dangers and glories, — to sit upon whose back is enough to awaken generous and noble emotions, and half converts his master into a hero, whose company is almost friendship, whose tread is the impulse of true nobility, whose movement is inspiration, whose neigh is delight, — for a senseless and unsympathizing monster of iron, "the glory of whose nostrils" is but a sickening congregation of smoky vapors, and whose eldritch scream resembles nothing so much as the yell, in unison, of a herd of bedeviled swine.

It is, in our opinion, somewhat less than problematical, whether such constant and easy means of familiarity do not breed contempt. And, as in a court, the salient virtues are quickly rubbed down to the standard gauge of morals, — conventional, smooth and slippery, — so, by this daily intermixture, upon the thronged thoroughfares of life, we lose something of that wholesome reverence for the unknown, which gave it the aspect of magnificence ; we imitate the obvious and easily-imitated failings of our companions, and begin to believe that the virtues we admired at a distance are little better than fabulous ; and society finally loses that individuality of personal character, which alone imparts its freshness and charm, as alone it indicates the free working of the spirit within. Instead of the *deus ex machinâ*, as society becomes assimilated to the *machine*, the divinity withdraws its presence and its power ; and the age which becomes

truly mechanical is, at length, like a skeleton robed in the habiliments of life; there is no longer lustre in its soulless eyes, or pulsation beneath its wire-compacted and artificial frame.

But, notwithstanding these influences, which are at work to spread this dull, stiffening and level crust over the surface of society, happily there is some volcanic fire beneath, which now and then breaks out. Nature, even in her slumbers, is yet vigorous and recuperative. The virtues and graces of life will still spring up, at times, out of the most seemingly arid waste; as the columbine lifts its graceful stem upon the thinly-scattered soil, and hangs its bells, of lovely hue, over the crevices of the rock.

When we speak of society, however, we mean that portion of it with which our story is most likely to be conversant. For the world around us is to us our world; and the cast of our thoughts takes its color from the objects which are most immediately within the circumference of our vision. Yet he can have used his inner eyes to little purpose who has not witnessed, within the narrowest circle, those elements of human nature, which, upon other and broader theatres, go to make up what constitutes the grand drama of life. But although we expect to have something to do with the city or its denizens, to which our preceding observations may be supposed more peculiarly applicable, yet we have no idea of producing our characters directly upon that stage of action. For, though New England energies are thought to come most prosperously to fruit in the city, it will most generally be found that the transplanted stock derived its virtues from the shoot, which first sprang in the more genial soil and purer air of the country.

We propose, then, to turn aside from the days in which it is our fortune to live, and to go back a few years, in order to recall those scenes, which it is our purpose to present. Not, however, O Young America! forth-putting and progressive, beyond your not very extensive range of natural and moral

vision. And yet, we beseech you, in reaching towards the future, forget not utterly the past! "Tell us not," in the words of one of your favorite writers, "that the past, measured by a cold philosophy, was no better and no loftier than the present; it is not thus seen by pure and generous eyes. Let the past perish when it ceases to reflect on its magic mirror the beautiful romance, which is its noblest reality, though perchance but the shadow of Delusion."

Before entering upon our story, however, we see fit to set down a brief dialogue, which we held with ourselves, and which aided very much in fixing our resolution to engage in this work.

"What do you propose to write here?"

"Something that I thought might prove interesting about Eastford."

"Eastford! I don't see how you can make anything out of it; it always appeared to me a pretty and pleasant little town enough, but quiet, and, in fact, I think uncommonly dull."

"But the people, my dear sir,—they it is who give life to a place."

"Why, they really seemed to me the cause of the dulness of the town. Quite a common-place population; indeed, decidedly hum-drum."

"All this is because you never really looked at them."

"You are quite mistaken; I have looked at both town and people very often."

"How did you look?"

"With my eyes, of course."

"Ah, you mean those round, grayish protuberances which project beneath your brows, and constitute a portion of the features of your face?"

"To be sure! With what should I look, sir?"

"Few people have eyes, properly so called. They see abso-

lutely nothing but the merest outside of things. Now I have thought to examine this subject with my inner eyes, and to call out its inner life; — in fact, I have, so to speak, idealized it. Are you not aware that external objects are not really interesting *per se*, but accordingly as they suggest other things, which are neither in them nor of them, and of which they are but the shows and shadows? What is a rock, — the hugest, for instance, — but a cold, gray, blank, barren mass of inanimate and sluggish matter? So the clodhopper regards it. Yet, clothe it with its associations, and how it rises upon the imagination! It has *size*, which is an element of grandeur, — *hardness*, the substantial quality of strength and power, — *age*, invoking the sacred sources of veneration and awe; and so of other characteristics. It is these associations and suggestions which make things agreeable and interesting, until by and by they become representatives of all the highest qualities of human nature itself.”

“Is it actually a novel?”

“Hardly, perhaps. I call it ‘Sketches,’ you perceive. But, if you look sharp, you may get more than you bargained for.”

“Is there really a plot, then?”

“A plot, sir! — yes, sir; a plot there is, and a very excellent plot. If my readers, unhappily, do not see it at once, why, I say nothing.”

“I fear, however, in treating this subject, you may be tempted into saying some disagreeable things, — people in small towns are so particular!”

“Very likely. Would you have me preach smooth sayings? I assure you, we are great self-flatterers. We deceive ourselves and one another too much altogether. Virtue cannot grow in such a pampered soil. My object is to tell the truth.”

“What is truth?”

“Ah! that is the question — the same that was proposed

by 'jesting Pilate.' In order to discover this, we must use our inner eyes again. A sincere seeker will find it."

"Still, our best speculations are often in the dark. To me it seems that we need more light to discover this mysterious 'truth.'"

"Let me reply to you, in the language of Pascal: 'There is light enough for those whose sincere wish is to see, and darkness enough to confound those of an opposite disposition.' So, *en avant*."

CHAPTER I.

—— “*Hic inter flumina nota,
Et fontes sacros.*”

VIRGIL.

“Allured to brighter worlds and led the way.” — GOLDSMITH.

It is very much to be doubted whether Mr. John Ather-ton, whom we now take the liberty to introduce to our read-ers, ever spent one entire day of his long and useful life in the capital city of his native state. It is true, that the care of a numerous and devoted flock, of which, in the phrase of Eastford, he was the “minister,” required of him duties which he yielded cheerfully and scrupulously, no less from inclination than regard for the sacred obligations which he had assumed. But, even in the coaching times of our ances-tors, Eastford was scarcely half a day’s journey from Oxton, which had not then arrived at its present municipal dignities, and the opening of the railroad, which eventually connected them still more closely, had set the little world of Eastford agog for the sights and various allurements of the capital.

Still, although his outgoings and incomings very much ex-ceeded those famous migrations of the Reverend Dr. Prim-rose, “from the blue bed to the brown,” and though, as cer-tainly, he resembled that immortal monogamist in nothing but the entire integrity and excellence of his public and personal character, he exhibited an unaccountable disinclination to depart from the ordinary sphere of his pursuits and duties. Indeed, if the truth must be told, the good man showed little patience (for the best will have their failings) towards those

kind and disinterested persons, who saw fit to make confidential comments upon his secluded habits of life; so much so, that, during the early period of his ministrations, when Miss Betty Poulter — a lady then fast verging towards a condition of strict maidenhood — communicated her earnest apprehensions to one of a select though extended circle of gossips, lest the minister “should mope himself to death,” the warmth of his expression was such, respecting her probable motive for seeking to convert his solitary waste into a garden of bloom, as to require some charity to conceive of it, as within the fair bounds of clerical decorum. Yet we believe that, had that been possible, it would have had some influence towards the control of the “unruly member” whose sharp point, like the nimble weapon of a practised fencer, so often touched the tender places of her too sensitive friends. Upon the severe discipline to which her foes, real or supposed, were occasionally subjected, it were useless to enlarge.

But we must do Mr. Atherton the justice to avow our belief, that his reprehension of this forth-putting damsel was caused rather by his disapproval of her apparent self-seeking and busy-bodying propensities, than by any wound which his own self-love might be supposed to have received. For, when Deacon Makepeace, whose three daughters, Judith, Hope and Mercy, were all of a marriageable age, had taken occasion solemnly and affectionately to urge upon the minister the scandals which might arise in the congregation, if a young clergyman, possessed of his personal graces, should long continue unmarried,—and even went so far as to hint his alarm lest thoughts of a more worldly nature, it was to be feared, might sometimes shadow that devout interest with which his public exercises were listened to by the female, as, to be sure, they were also by the male portion of his hearers, — Mr. Atherton informed him, with some embarrassment, that he was already under engagements, soon to be consummated, with Miss Julia Walton, the only and half-idolized daughter of

the truly excellent and most eminent physician of the better part of Eastford, and of the country round about.

But all this was much anterior to the date of our own story, for Mr. Atherton, at the opening of the principal events which we have in hand, had been all that a devoted and honored pastor could be, for a period of many years. And, indeed, the familiar and affectionate relations which existed between him and his people may well account for his reluctance to be long absent from those who required, in some of their varied interests, almost his daily counsel, if not some office of daily ministration; to raise, to soothe, to direct, or to warn; to point out whence only cometh

————— “that aid

Implored by humble minds and hearts afraid;”

to invoke the blessing so needful upon those who had just pledged to each other the all which earth can have to bestow, and at the mortal pillow to hold up that hope which alone can cheer as only it can save the dying and repentant sinner.

To him, indeed, his entire congregation seemed only like a more extended family circle, and he was thus intimate with the hopes, the trials, the joys, sufferings and peculiarities, — in a word, with the temporal as well as the spiritual condition of his flock; and truly his sympathy was as real as it was disinterested. Beyond the immediate claims of his own family upon his duty and affection, his main earthly object was their welfare. And although gratitude is unhappily no very thrifty or vigorous plant in the wilderness of this world, yet certainly his labors in his own field were not bestowed altogether in vain. Indeed, true benevolence is irresistible in proportion to its rarity; and not to love and respect Mr. Atherton was about equivalent to hatred of virtue itself. That the minister was welcomed with delight, therefore, in every household whose fireside he honored with his presence, while it argued his own excellence, went also, in no little measure,

to show the unsophisticated character of his parishioners. And, if ever a jealousy did arise in regard to the bestowal of his favors,—for such his visits were universally considered, and there are always Betty Poulterers enough to raise a breeze even about such matters,—his kind and beaming smile, at the next meeting, and the cordial grasp of his warm and honest hand, were enough to prove medicinal to the most desperate heart-burning.

From all this the inference is obvious, that the relations of Mr. Atherton to his parish were very different from those which exist in what we shall denominate our looser days. A “settlement” then meant really a settlement; and to neither party did the idea of its revocation occur. Our pious forefathers regarded their pastor no less as a friend than a spiritual teacher and guide; and they chose him, as men ought to choose their wives, for qualities likely to last a lifetime. The credentials of his office constituted his recognized title to the freedom of their families. To them, his mission was one touching their life-long and their immortal interests; and, when solemnly sealed amongst them to the work of the Gospel, he was over as well as with them, under sanctions too serious to be dissolved, except for cause adequate to the occasion. If faithful to his calling, no words could weigh the value of his service. As time passed on, he became intermingled and associated with all the dearest charities of life,—with their warmest family affections and the most solemn and affecting domestic rites. And as the often-repeated admonitions of a well-known and long-tried friend touch us more nearly than the counsels of a casual acquaintance, so his influence for good was efficient in proportion to its permanent character. And when, sooner or later, the good man was gathered to his rest, the voice of lamentation went up, as for a father in Israel.

But all this seems to have gone out, with wigs and cocked hats, or hats with brims of formidable dimensions, such as

were formerly worn on the venerated heads of the pastors of another day, and have faded, like those other characteristic articles of clerical attire, which made a clergyman in the street quite as distinguishable, as if he stood under the sounding-board of his own primitive meeting-house.

All this, we remark, is passed away. The meeting-house itself has suffered change. The very elders, who, in accordance with the respectful observance of another day, once claimed the reverence due to associated age, as their venerable forms bowed together beneath the pulpit of the sanctuary, alas! are scattered amongst the promiscuous multitude. The deacons, who once, with gravest aspect, faced the congregation, are denuded of their official dignities, so far as the outward exhibition is concerned, and actually occupy their family pews; while the sexton himself has long since ceased to be

—“perked up into a glistening grief”—

for such we could not help consider his conspicuous position at the head of the pulpit stairs, — and has at length submitted to be

————— “written on
The roll of common men.”

“I don’t like the idee,” exclaimed Elder Holdfast, a good man, but rather narrow, to one of his cronies, — “and I hope you ’re o’ my mind, brother Goodenow. This is reely a shiftin’ world; and now the talk is of gittin’ a stove into the meetin’-’us! Jest as if we could n’t keep ourselves warm in meetin’ without a stove! No, no! let the women-folks bring their foot-stoves, as they used to; that makes the meetin’-’us full warm enough; my gals have come and gone, with bare arms, and so ’ve your’n, winter ’n summer, rain or shine. I want to stand on the old ways, and” — shutting his eyes, as the good man was apt to do when a little excited and inclined to exhortation — “and now I ’ve heered they ’re

subscribin' round for an orgin! Yes, an orgin!" — raising his voice. "What on airth will they do next? That ever I should live to see a Popish tootin'-tub stuck up in our gallery! And, brethren," — forgetting himself a moment, — "what are we, to ask for stoves to warm us from these Russians, who are little better than barbarians and heathens; and orgins o' wood and brass, that do seem like idolatry, as if we could n't praise the Lord with our nateral voices, and that we should be pleasin' ourselves with creetur' comforts instead o' the meat that nourisheth, and go back, as 't were, to the milk fit for babes, and poor, sick and weak, queasy stomachs? And, brethren, — I mean brother Goodenow," — opening his eyes, — "I got recelly carried away; I'm sartainly afraid all this care for the outer portion only makes it worse for the better part of us."

And so they parted, on the way of their several "business and desire," with many doleful shakings of the head at innovations of such doubtful expediency, if not ominous import.

But even Mr. Atherton, although emphatically of those who "love no change," manifested satisfaction, rather than displeasure, at these proposed modifications, and prejudice at length yielded before the march of improvement. We mean to apply this remark, however, simply to those changes so feelingly deplored by the worthy elder to his compatriot; for whether the diminution of all the external array, and absence of personal attendance and respectful show, has not availed also to diminish the power of other things, affecting both minister and people, we can only guess, by endeavoring to trace the causes of effects, which are only too evident.

It must not be supposed, however, that the pretty town of Eastford, though small enough in territory, was only a country village. Far from it; it had its river, its merchants, its commerce, its public edifices, and, in some sort, its stately ways. Whatever its present condition, it had once been a

prosperous and busy little place. As for its situation, it is unnecessary to describe it in detail. Suffice it to say, that it was one of the prettiest of the smaller towns of New England; which, if they lack much which gives the character of solidity and permanence even to many of the villages of England and the continent, yet often possess a charm of their own, in the very lightness and airy cheerfulness of their structures; or, rather, we should say, most of these edifices — since many of the buildings of Eastford were as substantial as brick and mortar could make them. And few places could boast with so much reason of that most graceful of all trees, the American elm, files of which overhung the principal street, magnificent in their noble proportions, luxuriant in graceful foliage, stately in venerable age; and stood, like an army of Titans, proudly tossing their matchless plumage, so rich, so golden, so verdant, as it swayed and glittered to the sunlight and the breeze.

Of course, every house had its garden, and very pretty gardens many of them were; though long before Mexico, or the Amazon, or the then untrampled solitudes of the West, had poured their gorgeous, but, it must be admitted, somewhat unpoetic stores, to deck the cultivated parterres of the Atlantic. No; these were the flowers of dear old England, — her flowers; beloved for her memories; embalmed by the sentiments familiar to her heart; consecrated by the literature, which honored and immortalized her history! Such flowers, indeed, O Proserpina! as

———— “frighted, thou lett'st fall
From Dis's wagon,” —

and, peerless over all,

———— “the garden-queen, the Rose!”

The sea itself was at no very great distance from the town. In fact, the softened murmurs of its chafing rote could be distinctly heard of a still evening, as it leaped with wailing

cry upon the belabored beach. Not so often could its ocean-sound be heard, while the storm was brewing, in the mingled caldron of chaos ! Not so audibly did it utter its articulate warning, while the tempest was stalking to its field of conflict, loaded with auguries of the impending hour ! When the whirlwind was mustering his forces in the crowded atmosphere, the elemental voices, howling and shrieking in inharmonious concert, would drown or deaden the prophetic monotone of the advancing surge ! But when the blast and the tempest were done, and the genius of the storm drew off "the sons of the wind," and shrinking and prostrate Nature once more revived and smiled, as if all had been, and forever would be, peace, it was sweet, in the hush of the summer twilight, to listen to that softened and continuous echo of the footsteps of the receding wave.

CHAPTER II.

“ My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth ;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise,
The son of parents passed into the skies.”

COWPER.

THE original ancestor of Mr. Atherton in New England was one of the earliest of those who sacrificed “home” — as they loved to call the land of their nativity — as soon as they discovered that the hopes they had formed for the success of Presbyterianism in England, under the auspices of James I., at his accession, were doomed to be disappointed by that faithless and inconsistent king, and man without common sense.

Accordingly, his own was one of those associated families which, in the year of our Lord, 1633, — or thirteen years after the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, — landed upon these shores, which were henceforth to prove to them an asylum and a dwelling-place. Nor did they halt long in their march through the unbroken and “howling wilderness,” until they had reached the territory of their appointed habitation, which no human steps, save those of the forest-hunter, had ever before trodden. And this wild and inhospitable region, beyond the pale of Christian sight or sound, filled with unknown dangers and dedicated to certain miseries, — in memory of that quiet village, the home of most or of all, that village whose cherished scenes and buried hopes still clung so fondly to their hearts, — they lovingly welcomed as Eastford ; by

that familiar name, — their Eastford now, instead of that, which had so mournfully faded from their straining eyes, behind those blue, forlorn, unfathomable depths, higher and higher uptowering, of an ocean henceforth to them impassable and relentless.

It was not, however, to escape religious persecution alone, that these adventurous spirits had built their hopes upon the promised foundations of the New World. That was the motive, unquestionably, with the wanderers at Plymouth. But those, who soon afterwards followed, came rather with the avowed purpose of erecting a Civil State, as well as to secure the liberty of unencumbered worship.

In due process of time, allotments of the extensive tracts of fertile and unoccupied lands were made, correspondent with each man's means and disposition of improvement, qualified or enhanced, no doubt, by the personal dignity and claims of the individual settler. Of course, Mr. John Atherton, who was one of the principal grantees of their common stock of territory, obtained what was thought fitting a person of his consideration, and which proved entirely satisfactory to his own desires. In addition to this, at a later period, he purchased that outlying farm, about five or six miles from the settlement at Eastford, which still remains in the family, and the deed of which, subscribed with a rude attempt at an arrow-mark (for the purchase was of the Indian chief of the territory), has, happily, been preserved. At that day, however, its value was almost, if not entirely, prospective, from the danger which attended the cultivation of distant fields.

From this progenitor descended, through several successive generations of prudent and unambitious cultivators of the soil, portions, at least, of their original landed acquisitions to Colonel Atherton, the father of the Reverend John Atherton, of Eastford. We should be glad to linger, longer than would be convenient in this story, upon the characters of these men, who are too often regarded merely as stern,

dark and uncompromising bigots. But though, undoubtedly, many singular instances of nice exactitude in external demeanor have exposed these good men to much unmerited obloquy, we believe them to have been far more earnest, sincere and devoted, in their domestic affections and relations, than those who have maligned and ridiculed them. Whoever should peruse his letters home to the "dear heart" or "sweet life" of some Puritan officer, it may be, as he lay encamped amidst the tangled thickets of the savage wilderness, upon some one of their never-failing expeditions against the relentless foe, might find those words grow dim and dimmer before his eyes, as he lingered over their accents of tender and home-like love.

No doubt, their sincere and well-founded dislike to the unbridled license and profligate manners of a worthless court tended to lead them too far towards the opposite extreme of unreasonable sanctimoniousness, in their external demeanor. Upon this outward manifestation alone, without regard to the sterling virtues and excellences of the real man, the harsh judgments to which they are subjected have been too often formed. But even one, whom they thoroughly disliked, and who as thoroughly despised them, — the brilliant and abandoned favorite of the James, who had disappointed their just expectations, and of the Charles, in whom they had no hope, — even Villiers, has said, "One can no more judge of the true value of a man, by the impression he makes on the public, than we can tell whether the seal was of gold or brass, by which the stamp was made."

Gold they unquestionably were! — tried in the crucible of no common afflictions; tested by experiences which only the purest metal could abide; unflinching in their resistance to a corrupt hierarchy; uncompromising in their hatred to political tyranny; unabated in their ardor for the diffusion of human intelligence; prompt at the moment of peril; devoted in the hour of danger. No colonists have braved such suffer-

ings, endured such calamities, wrought such successes, accomplished such results; none, with means so inadequate and spirit so unbroken, through the extraordinary period of nearly a century and a half, against savage foes, and the veterans of European warfare, during their long and disheartening Indian conflicts, — at Crown Point, and Ticonderoga, and Louisburg, and Quebec, — so willingly perilled their lives, and spent their hearts' blood, upon so many adventurous, and, often, chivalrous fields!

To the second successful expedition against Louisburg the grandfather of Mr. Atherton had led a company, composed of his neighbors and friends, a portion of the contingent destined for this almost romantic enterprise against the Dunkirk of America, — by far the greater part of the forces detailed for the undertaking having been furnished by his native state.

When the colonists rose against the mother-country, his son received his father's sword, from the hands of the high-spirited but somewhat broken old man. For when, at the termination of the ordinary religious services on Sunday, the gray-haired clergyman had taken occasion to urge their duty to their country, in the ears of his congregation, and, at the close of an ardent and stirring address, animated, no doubt, by some kindling gleam of that old fiery spirit, which once made Cromwell's preachers-militant irresistible in conventicle and in field, he called upon those, who "were ready for the great work, to present themselves there, at that moment, and in that place, — both propitious to the assumption of a righteous cause, — at the altar of religion itself, in the presence of their wives and children and whatever else was most dear to them on earth; in the very sanctuary, whose unceasing and fervent prayers would attend upon and hallow their devoted courage, and while the blood of their martyred countrymen was hardly yet dry in the green lanes of Lexington and Concord," — it was remarked that young Atherton was the very first to advance into the broad aisle of the meeting-house,

and to offer his manly person for the honorable but perilous service.

Few, indeed, could be present at such a spectacle, without yielding themselves to the current of feelings, which the heart chooses other vehicles than words to manifest and unfold. But when Atherton came gallantly forward, his breast heaving with generous emotion, and the steady resolution of his brow contradicting the modest blushes of his manly cheek, the fairest eyes in that assembly were deluged in a transport of tears.

“Take this sword, my son,” said Captain Atherton, after the speedily-formed company of volunteers had selected the young man for their commander; “it has been borne by me, I trust not without honor, in the service of the king. But there are duties higher than any, which an honest man can owe even to his sovereign; and these claim every sacrifice of him, who is not willing to cast away honor, and with it whatever makes life something to be cherished rather than endured.”

“I need not say to you, father,” replied the youthful commander, “how much my heart is in this contest; and I hope I shall do nothing to disgrace my sword, or the office with which my townsmen — thanks to your example and character — have seen fit to honor me.”

Accordingly, his company duly appeared at Bunker Hill, the battle itself taking place within a few weeks following its enlistment. And after that impetuous, desperate and immortal day, upon the organization of the northern army, under the auspices of the commander-in-chief, it became regularly incorporated with the regiment of its district. Through the various fortunes of the war, the young officer continued in the service, honorably distinguishing himself upon such opportunities as presented, — and, alas! they were only too many, calling for all the courage, and prudence, and fortitude of a man, — and, at its close, had long held the rank and that

title of colonel by which he was ever afterwards so well known.

In after days he was in the habit of saying, that Washington was the only person he had ever seen who, at all times, and under all circumstances, impressed him as being uniformly great; as great in the beautiful simplicity, consistency and dignity, of his well-balanced character, amidst the easy intercourse of the social circle, as when he stood superior to the complicated calamities of a disastrous campaign, or rode steadily along the line upon the eve of the most momentous engagement; that indignation for just and weighty cause, — such as Lee's untimely retreat at Monmouth, or neglected precautions, which might have anticipated the escape of Arnold, — was the only passion which, upon very rare occasions, seemed to gain the mastery over his soul; that he was no more elated unduly, when the surrendered sword of the enemy at Yorktown sealed the established liberties of a nation, than he was dispirited and despondent amidst the wintry gloom of Valley Forge, or under the hard privations and almost desperate fortunes of that dark and terrible campaign in "the Jerseys;" that these singular and admirable qualities, together with his true tenderness of feeling, whenever feeling was generous and becoming, and the entirely irreproachable tenor of his private life, formed, in his opinion, the elements of the most perfect merely human character which the world had ever seen.

Upon the disbandment of the forces, Colonel Atherton hastened home. His father had been some time deceased. The evil chances of a seven-years' war had made sad ravages in his moderate fortune. The frequent inability and consequent ill credit of the government had made it necessary for the young officer to rely a great deal upon his private means for the supply of the unavoidable expenses of his station. And this sacrifice, in common with other high-spirited gentlemen, he had willingly made, for the sake of the common

cause. Upon his return home, therefore, he collected, as far as it was possible, his scattered but still decent resources, and took possession of the out-farm, which still remained unencumbered, and was, for the most part, as wild as nature herself could contrive to leave it.

And his choice was wisely fixed; for, besides the unsettled condition of the times, and the unpropitious prospects of commercial enterprise, a life in the camp, for so long a period, had tended, perhaps, to unfit his habits for the requirements of business, and to alienate his disposition from its details. He soon married that Miss Julia Astley, who became, by turns, so red and white, when he stepped into the broad aisle of the meeting-house, and whose portrait, as a young girl, by Copley, still adorns the front parlor of the house at Eastford. She must have been a great beauty in her youth. Her wilderness of hair is of that golden tint, which, when it is perfect in its hue, is suggestive of something angelic, and seems to have caught its light from heaven itself. The deep blue eyes dance with a half-suffused but yet joyous gleam. Her complexion —

“O, call it fair, not pale!” —

indicates refinement, and, perhaps, delicate health. Her dress is a simple frock, of the slightest perceptible roseate tinge, and she holds a single rose-bud in a hand scarcely formed for the meaner offices of life.

The farm-house, which had been built some years before, and to which Colonel Atherton conducted his lovely bride, was of a description common enough to the times. Its situation was incomparable. It faced the south-west, and from its peaked roof the rafters descended, on the north-easterly exposure, to within one story of the ground. It was situated quite at the summit of an elevated piece of land, affording an extensive view of a diversified and interesting reach of country. A forest of oaks extended far into the rear, while on one side stood a clump of stately pines, and at the foot of the

lawn-like declivity brawled a brook, shaded by willows, and over it a rustic bridge, which constituted the ordinary means of access to the house. We hesitate to announce that the dwelling was painted red; but this barbarism resulted rather from the necessities of the times, than the taste of its occupants.

It was here that the minister of Eastford was born; and amidst these rural and quiet scenes was passed the early portion of his youth, until the preparation was completed requisite for his entrance into a New England college. This preparation was obtained under the private instruction of a popular and competent teacher at Eastford, whither the young man periodically repaired for the purpose of making the necessary recitations. These excursions were performed generally upon the back of his father's charger, old "Trenton," who, at a very advanced age, still retained the spirit if not the bottom of his warlike days; but not unfrequently on foot, by that manly and independent means of locomotion, which nature generously provides, and which so few of our modern countrymen and countrywomen know how to value.

His preparatory studies for the ministry, after the honorable completion of his collegiate course, were pursued under the guidance of the Reverend Jonathan Styles, of West Arlington, whose own early training had been had at Edinburgh, and who had commended himself to Colonel Atherton, especially, by his zealous and fearless discharge of the duties of a chaplain to the revolutionary army. And Mr. Styles was often afterwards in the habit of remarking that, "Mr. Atherton exceeded all the other young gentlemen of his acquaintance, in the extent of his classical acquisitions and the admirable elegance and accuracy of his taste; and, although certainly other gifts and graces were of infinitely higher importance to the calling of a Christian minister, yet in him every advance in knowledge seemed rather to abate, than aggravate, the natural vanity of the human heart, and

that pride of intellect, by which many famous scholars, it was to be feared, had been only too easily deluded."

In consequence of this tenor of life and an intercourse with Eastford, which, if cordial and most welcome, certainly, to him and his father's son, was still casual and broken by protracted absence, he escaped, in a great measure, the reproach of being "a prophet in his own country." And so it was that—a vacancy having for some time existed, in consequence of the lamented decease of Dr. Kettleton—after a careful probation as a candidate, and an infinite round of tea-drinkings with its principal matrons (to which severe discipline he always afterwards attributed some habitual weakness of stomach), a scrupulous examination of his doctrinal soundness, and a most thorough canvas of his mental, moral, theological and personal qualifications, the parish of Eastford gave him a call so unanimous, that it left no room or reason for hesitation, which he might otherwise have entertained.

For although, after his first eminently successful public exercise, one ancient and not too readily satisfied Presbyterian, of the old standards, who had long fructified under the sometimes deeply metaphysical discourses of Dr. Kettleton, and who was, no doubt, a lineal descendant of some fighting Cameronian, shook his silvery head, at the meeting-house door, and muttered to a compatriot, "Husks, husks!—no food to-day!" yet he afterwards admitted that "some defect in hearing, arising from a severe cold" (he had long been quite deaf), "might have led him to too hasty conclusions; and, having talked the matter fully over with his daughter and grand-daughters, at home, he now felt sure that the young minister must have the root of the matter in him."

In his descent from such an ancestry as we have rapidly sketched, Mr. Atherton felt a satisfaction, which hardly degenerated into pride. Certainly he was not the man to boast of such advantages. He would have taken no pleasure in an alliance with blood, which had "crept through scoundrels,"

from the obscurest period of history, or with lines of men, however long descended, who became notorious chiefly by their brilliant vices and often doubtful services, in the cause of country or mankind.

But the lives of his ancestors, if not eminently distinguished, had at least been useful and honorable ; and a descent of two hundred years from brave, and self-sacrificing, and upright men, he valued not as “ blood,” but as claiming of himself its unstained transmission to his posterity.

In this country, of course, the pretences of aristocracy are not only ridiculous, but equally unmeaning and unfounded. But if there really be any claim to such distinctions, those which we have thus deduced form the only title, which a man of sense would think worthy his consideration.

The marriage of Mr. Atherton, which was duly solemnized under the happiest auspices, necessarily settled all rival pretensions, and left those ladies of the parish, who had been the most anxious for the minister's welfare.—now, of course, the peculiar care of Mrs. Atherton—more leisure for the performance of other duties, which, for a time, seemed likely to fall into some neglect.

CHAPTER III.

“Yen un cavallo cavalga.”

SPANISH BALLAD.

“Ran, Coll, our dog, and Talbot with the band,
And Malkin with her distaff in her hand.”

DRYDEN.

IN a small place, like Eastford, we suppose a gentleman of studious habits may reasonably require something to vary the monotony of his ordinary avocations. Accordingly, the Rev. Mr. Atherton might often be seen on horseback, trotting along the pleasant roads, or sauntering through the quiet lanes in the neighborhood of the town. Indeed, his early use and the kind but strict tuition of his father, himself a most accomplished horseman, had afforded him excellent training in this manly and generous exercise. The good colonel really seemed to think him but half a man, who was untaught to ride, or who had no spirit for the noble art of horsemanship. “There is nothing like it,” he would say, “to stir your blood and animate your spirits. It really gives one a double existence, and, in fact, superadds a sort of higher nature; for it lifts him above the mere common soil of earth, and wafts him along at a speed, of which he were otherwise incapable. It makes him more servicable to his friends, and more formidable to his foes.”

And although, most likely, Colonel Atherton had never read Xenophon, he insisted strenuously upon at least two of those chief points of discipline for the young, which, that

charming author informs us, were inculcated upon their youth by the ancient Persians.

“To ride, to shoot with the bow, and to speak the truth,” constituted, according to the Greek historian, the elements of physical and moral culture, amongst the famous people of Cyrus, in the days of their highest glory. And truly this most practical and honorable system of education tended, in our opinion, to make a man more of a man, than many things now taught in some of our most eminent seminaries of learning.

In point of fact, however, besides the other two objects of discipline, even the “shooting with the bow” was not entirely neglected at “the Farms;” for, as the colonel would not countenance in his family what is called *gunning* for sport, and as boys have an undoubted natural propensity for projectiles of some description, he saw fit to indulge this tendency, by often engaging with them in some of the competitions of rustic archery; and he entered into the game with interest and spirit, amongst the youngest of his household and their companions; and would sometimes even induce occasional and very grave guests, who had long forgotten, if they ever knew, what “play” meant, to make most awkward and utterly unsuccessful attempts to strike the not very difficult target.

Of a lazy summer’s day, in the afternoon, — it might be after an early tea, when the sun was almost ready to sink behind the grove of pines, — it was very agreeable to engage in a species of exercise deserving more attention than it receives, beneath the shade of the great elm, which still stretches its broad and stalwart arms across most of the front of the house, in company with such lads and lasses, as were visiting our young people, or had the freedom of “the Farms;” for the use of the bow gives play to important muscles, and sharpens several of the senses, and, if cultivated, could not fail to aid in the improvement of some of our most valuable faculties; and accuracy of vision, sensibility of touch, steady-

ness of nerve, quickness of action, and readiness of judgment, — all so essential to the ordinary as well as the extraordinary purposes of life, — are both required and developed in the practice of this implement, as much as with the boasted and more deadly rifle.

But it was in a matter connected with this sport, that young Atherton might almost have said, with Mazeppa —

——— “ill betide
The school wherein I learned to ride !”

The boy, as we remarked, had been early accustomed to the saddle; indeed, from the time he could fairly sit astride a horse's back. But the companion of his boyish ramblings had been “old Trenton,” a steed perfectly indifferent to the ordinary annoyances which disturb the equanimity of his kind, and who never had a thought of so rude a thing, as attempting to throw a civil rider. In the excellent kindness of his nature, he was entirely amenable to the most gentle solicitations, except when roll of drum and fife assailed his short and active ears, upon which occasions he would stamp and snort, if fastened, or, if on the road, it required no ordinary inducements to restrain him from presenting his person in the fore-front of the militia-muster, or whatever other public demonstration might be going forward. The differences of intelligence in his species are almost as marked as in human beings. If Trenton's ordinary demeanor was unexceptionable, he knew perfectly well how to accommodate himself to circumstances; and if a child were placed upon his back, the steadiness and dignity of his quiet walk would have done no discredit to the gravest embryo candidate for a vacant judgeship. Whenever he made the martial exhibitions which we have intimated, and, indeed, on all other public occasions, he never failed to attract the attention of the knowing ones. His broad breast and handsome limbs, his clean and well-formed hoofs, his full and clear eyes, which seemed really to

open up from the very depths of his brave and honest heart — together with the undocked glories of his thick and flowing tail, and his other not inferior equine perfections, — were the themes of scarcely qualified commendation with the most eminent jockeys. The bright star on his forehead gave great beauty to his small and shapely head, but his color, in other respects, was a dark chestnut, if not fairly verging on bay.

Young Atherton was proud of his horse, and, it may be, a little proud of himself; for he was, indeed, a noble and high-spirited boy.

“ I say, young man, how old might that hoss o’ your’n be ? ” was the inquiry, perhaps, of some not uninquisitive brother Jonathan, in the market-place of Eastford.

“ Trenton never told my father his age, sir, and he is too polite to introduce the subject himself.”

“ Well, I do declare ! who ever heer’d of a hoss talking, before ? Sharp, hey ? ”

“ Why, sir, Livy ” (the young fellow was just getting on in his classics) “ tells of an ox speaking, and why not a horse ? ”

“ I don’ ’no nothing about Olivy. She must be an old fool to tell such a story ; you know that as well as I do. We don’t have talking-hosses in these parts. But I should judge this hoss of your’n, or your father’s, to be — lem’me look at his mouth a minute.”

“ I have no wish for information, sir, about the age of my horse ; besides, he sometimes bites strangers.”

“ Thought you said ’t was your father’s hoss ! ”

“ I don’t believe my father cares to know more than he does about it.”

“ Well, as near as I can guess, now, without seeing the critter’s teeth,” — turning to the bystanders, — “ and from what I’ve heern about him, I should judge this animal not far from sixteen. But he’s a dreadful good hoss *now*.”

“ As you give your opinion, sir, without a request, of

course you 'll not expect a fee," said young Atherton, laughing, as he rode away.

" Dreadful high-strung young chap, that ! " said the disappointed but good-natured jockey.

" O, that 's young Atherton, — Colonel Atherton's boy, up to ' the Farms, ' " said another. " He 's going to be college-larnt, they say."

" O, I thought he seemed sort o' peart ! "

It happened, one day, in anticipation of the arrival of some friends, that the usual stock of bows needed replenishing. Their manufacture was generally accomplished by such handicraftsmen as were upon the place ; but the materials wherewith to replenish the exhausted armory could only be procured at a cooper's work-shop, at the distance of several miles. The lad, then about twelve years of age, started for the expedition, upon a horse scarcely fitted for the occasion, since Trenton was in use ; but this was an animal of far less matured graces. Indeed, he was young and high-spirited, and little broken to any but careful usage. The fearless and handsome boy, however, thought little of difficulties or dangers, and, gallantly mounted on his high-stepping steed, set forth in quest of the necessary material. Upon obtaining an article of sufficient size for the purpose, it proved more unwieldy than he had anticipated ; for it was considerably taller than himself, and weighed almost half as much. Indeed, so heavy a plank was far too great weight to be carried in this manner. Nevertheless, young Atherton grasped it closely under his right arm, and rested its lower edge upon the foot of his boot, where it projected from the stirrup. He gathered the reins firmly in his left hand, and trusted, with his confident skill and ordinary good fortune, to be able to accomplish the homeward journey without difficulty.

But his horse, from the first, had shown himself rather shy of this strange experiment at double-riding, and proved not a little reluctant to receive the extraordinary addition to his

burden. Accordingly, with sundry oblique glances at an object which evidently afforded him no satisfaction, he had started off at a pretty round pace, and the youth soon found the plank even more unmanageable than he feared. His left hand was sufficiently occupied with the reins, with very slight opportunity of bettering his hold; and the right one was hardly able to keep the clumsy burden in its proper position. In fact, as they were proceeding at a very smart pace, the perspiration streaming down the youth's face, and his horse and load together giving him quite as much play as he desired, at an unlucky moment the sharp corner of the wood touched his startled horse in the flank, and, in an instant, it was neck or naught! Fast and furious was the gallop of the strong steed. Drop the plank young Atherton would not; but, with all his efforts to keep it upright, as the animal bounded forward, the plank was, now and then, jounced against his side, and gave only new impulse to his speed.

Such unusual and rapid clatter of hoofs on the ordinarily quiet road, brought, here and there, some old woman hastily to the open door of her house; and, with hands uplifted and capped head shaking, she would cry, —

“O, dear sirs! the boy will be killed! the boy *will* be killed!”

“Lord-a-massy!” cried another, “what on airth *has* he got in his hands?”

Catching the sound of his coming from afar, the gray geese, at the pool by the road-side, lazily lifted their flapping wings, and, screeching and hissing, awkwardly waddled across the way, where they were certainly no safer than before, besides running no little risk in their passage.

A snarling cur ran from a barn-yard, and, in a most cowardly manner, barked at heels, which soon left him to the enjoyment of his own vain vociferations.

Still the boy grasped his prize with might and main, and kept his seat like a hero, and held his horse stiffly by the rein.

In this manner they ran their course for a mile or more, and perhaps, in a longer run, young Atherton might have succeeded in bringing his horse to terms. But, unfortunately, it happened that their road lay over a part of the highway, which was completely broken up by certain repairs then in progress, and upon which the workmen were at the time employed. There could be no great trouble in picking one's way over this rough portion of the road at a foot-pace. In a regular race, it became a rather difficult operation for man and beast. As they approached the ugly pass, Master John gathered his reins closely to his breast; but as the leaping animal floundered amongst the holes, and heaps of dirt, and piles of stones, he stumbled, and, as recovery was hopeless, fell forward at his full length.

With great presence of mind, the boy, at the instant, flung the unwieldy plank upon one side, just as he was himself thrown some distance upon the other. The surveyor of highways and his gang had dispersed with summary expedition. But happily the lad lighted upon nothing harder than a pyramid of gravel, and he was up and on his feet quicker than his horse was able to rise. In fact, the only ill consequences of his fall were a few scratches upon his person, while his jacket was presented to the eyes of the scattered and alarmed workmen in a rather dilapidated condition. He carefully brushed the knees of the trembling animal, whom the disaster had somewhat tamed, and, when he had soothed him for a minute or two, remounted and rode him quietly home, leaving the *terribila causa* of the calamity to be transported to its destination, by some more convenient and appropriate means of conveyance.

Fortunately, it proved that the horse himself, owing to the nature of the ground, really received no serious detriment, but was bright as ever by the next morning. As for the colonel, he only laughed at the accident, since it turned out no worse; for, entertaining very decided opinions on the

subject of the masculine culture proper for young men, he was not the person to make much ado about those inevitable mishances, to which boys seem subject, in the progress of their youthful experience.

“As for boys,” he used to say, “they must take it rough and tumble. A little hard usage does them no sort of harm. If a man were intended to sell tapes and bonnets all his life, why, bring him up as delicately as you please. But if he engages in the business fit for men, he will get a good many hard knocks in this world, and find himself in many stirring scenes, where he will need to have all his wits about him. A rough jostle or so, in his early days, serves to shake his faculties well together, and make them, as they ought to be, ready for action.”

“But women, also, have much to undergo in this world, colonel,” would suggest, perhaps, some tender mother, whose lily-livered offspring had no stomach for the Spartan doctrines of the uncompromising old officer, whose silvered and venerable brow showed, in more than one instance, that personal experience had not tended to modify the strength of his theories; “would you have them also brought up to endure hardships, poor things?”

“Ah, my dear madam,” he replied, “the case is different. Woman, permit me to say, is the mystery as well as the masterpiece of God’s creation! When she is a true woman, she is charming under all circumstances. But her sphere is endurance, rather than action; and accordingly nature has gifted her with fortitude far surpassing ours. She best answers the ordinary purposes of her creation, as well as best serves her own happiness, by making herself as agreeable as possible to our rougher sex. This can only be effected, by means of the softer graces and accomplishments; for, I take it, there is no object more unnatural, and, therefore, more revolting to a true man, than a masculine woman. My idea certainly is, to give her such an education as will best develop the peculiar

charms and characteristics of her sex. I should treat a young girl with great tenderness. Give her such physical training as is necessary for her health. I like to see the delicate bloom of the rose upon their cheeks, but not too rude a glow. But be gentle with them, my dear madam, be gentle. And now, as the evening is propitious, suppose we take a turn with the young folks, at the bow and arrows? ”

It is quite true, therefore, that Mr. Atherton was,— as was often remarked by those who witnessed his equestrian performances,— a graceful and firm rider. In almost all weathers, he indulged in this exhilarating exercise, which quite “ set him up,” he was wont to say, when he was “ run down,” as a faithful minister often finds himself, by the daily cares and labors of his professional life.

CHAPTER IV.

“ On such a night
Stood Dido, with a willow in her hand,
Upon the wild sea bank, and waved her love
To come again to Carthage.”

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

— “ *Veteres avias tibi de pulmone revello.*”

PERS.

“ O, MY dear husband, the sea! the sea!” exclaimed Mrs. Atherton, one evening, when that gentleman came in rather late, from one of his usual rambles,— “ what a dread and troublous voice it has to-night! Georgy was sleepy, and I put him to bed, and took my shawl, and listened to the distant roar from the piazza, till I could really endure it no longer, and ran in to wait for your coming home.”

“ There is sorrow on the sea ; it cannot be quiet,” replied the minister.

“ How very beautiful that is!” said his wife ; “ where is it ?”

“ I am sorry you do not recognize it, my love.”

“ I do not know that it ever attracted my attention before.”

“ So it seems ; but you know I have often said to you, that whoever reads the Bible, however constantly, will be sure to find something new,— something which seems to him as fresh, as if observed for the first time. The passage is, indeed, full of meaning, and comes from that sole book, whose language surpasses all that human genius has conceived. How insignificant would seem the most elaborate description, compared

with the power, the grandeur, the scope, the majestic simplicity of these few words! I scarcely know of a passage of Scripture more profoundly expressive. It is poetry, flowing from the fountain of truth itself, whence, indeed, all true poetry derives its inspiration; and that the English language should be so capable of conveying in translation the matchless utterance of the inspired penman, pleads very strongly for our beautiful native tongue, which so many are disposed to own as harsh and homely."

"I know your love for the English language, my dear, and that you are never ready to admit its inferiority."

"*Au contraire*, as an Irishman might say; and, considering the degrading assumption of your proposition, I allege its superiority."

"I am but a poor proficient in languages, as you know too well, John: to me this seems as beautiful as it can be. But tell me why you think English the best."

"Perhaps, because you speak it so charmingly, little one! Even its most sibilant sounds come sweet to me from your lips; not to make any account of that slight lisp of yours, which, I have often told you, is rather becoming than otherwise."

"Perhaps I do so on purpose, John; who knows?" said she, leaning on his shoulder.

"Somewhat she lisped for her wantonnesse,
To make her English sweet upon her tongue."

I declare, old Chaucer didn't seem to think the lisping sound so very disagreeable. But you have not answered my question."

"Well, my love, if you desire a disquisition on language, I shall tell you I consider the English really the superior tongue, upon every fair view of its titles to respect. French, they say, is the language of conversation,—perhaps so,—though not, in my opinion, to the exclusion of our vernacular.

Italian certainly fits best into song, and has many beauties peculiarly its own; but, it must be confessed, its movement is rather artificial and formal. Spanish is a noble language. Compliments roll from it with incomparable sonorousness. Besides it has plenty of idiomatic phrases, which I consider much in its favor. It betokens genius and originality in the race. The Spaniards are a people of good sense, my dear, and this useful quality stamps itself on a language, in striking expressions of individual peculiarity and natural observation and homely wisdom. I am not, perhaps, so profoundly versed in these questions, as your blinded eyes lead you to imagine; but this I should not hesitate to pronounce,—that, although the English language possesses none of the most striking characteristics of the others, in their perfection, it has them all to a sufficient degree (saying somewhat less about the softness), and rightfully may claim to be more idiomatic, and *ergo*, more expressive of sense than either. Then it surpasses them all in copiousness, strength and variety, and in its capacity of adaptation to the highest and homeliest purposes of human life. Indeed, this very passage, which is so natural and impressive in its sublime simplicity, according to our common translation of Scripture, to me appears comparatively mean and feeble in the versions of other languages.”

“I am content to find it beautiful,” she said, repeating the passage again slowly to herself; “‘There is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet.’ There is something dim and mysterious, and awful about it — just like the sea. It affects me much as I felt, when I was alone listening to the ocean this evening. I assure you I was quite superstitious.”

“Why so? the roar of the sea is a natural and not a very uncommon phenomenon.”

“True! But now you are in one of your calm moods; and one might almost think you cold, who did not know how true and warm your heart is, and how really sensitive you are to whatever is grand and beautiful in nature.”

“ You have always done your best to spoil me, Jule ; but I trust my calmness arises from reflection and habitual self-possession, rather than want of earnest feeling. I acknowledge deeply the mysterious and indefinable influence of the ocean ; but, nevertheless, I shall not unresistingly submit myself to an unknown fear.”

“ But don't you think, you are more than ever impressed with a sort of unspeakable awe in the presence of the ocean, — so vast as it is, and so terrible ? ”

“ Perhaps, except amongst mountains. But it is, after all, to be doubted, whether these wonderful objects of nature are more significant manifestations of him who created them, than those more ordinary exhibitions, which we are only too much inclined to disregard. At the rock of Horeb, God was neither in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire, but in the ‘ still small voice ! ’ Or, perhaps, His word would teach us, that the terrors with which sensible objects are sometimes clothed afford not such absolute emblems of His general designs towards us, as those gentler admonitions, which are constantly appealing to our consciences and common sensibilities. I urge no argument, my love, in derogation of the influence, which the sublimer aspects of creation should awaken in our souls. Our consciousness is none too active, as it is ; and it is to be feared, we should become altogether insensible, if we were not sometimes startled from our sluggishness, by extraordinary apparent variations in the course of nature and in the sensible aspect of external things.”

“ I am almost afraid to tell you of another circumstance, which I am ashamed to say may have disturbed me a little. It was so silly ! ”

“ O, let us have it by all means.”

“ But, will you promise not to laugh at me ? ”

“ My dearest love, I am at present adamant against the most insidious approaches of mirth.” And he drew her toward him, and into a position, where she nestled with affectionate

satisfaction. "But what is this wonderful development?" he continued.

"Why, old Mrs. Dowling, you know, came in this afternoon to make a call. Her son is at sea, and I suppose she is full of apprehensions, poor body, especially after this terrible storm. To be sure, Henry Dowling is not expected on the coast for a good while; but, no doubt, she thinks the storm extends all over the world. Well,— she says, that the mirror, which has hung in their front parlor these forty years, cracked last night from top to bottom. A sure sign of something awful to happen very soon, she says it is; and she felt so low, she thought she would come over and have a little chat with me; and she told me so many terrible stories, that I got really nervous before she went. She says that their house shook so with the wind, too, they could hardly lie in their beds."

"Yes, I think she was well set to work, to come here with her dismals to alarm a woman in your condition! I can only say, in regard to a lady of her years, that I wish she had evinced more discretion. The old house must have shook hard to break the looking-glass, though."

"But do you wonder that I became a little, just a little, superstitious?"

"O, not at all! especially as the connection is so obvious between a broken mirror and a mortal calamity."

"Ah, now you are laughing at me!"

"Laughing! I'm as grave as a judge. The intimation would certainly seem rather vague, to be thus conveyed by a superior intelligence, to which only future events can be known; and the only effect of the revelation would be, so far as I can see, to fill the mind beforehand with indefinite presentiments of evil, only too soon to present itself in certain shape and dread reality."

"Have you no faith in presentiments, my dear husband?"

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' I leave the future to Him who only knows, and alone controls it."

CHAPTER V.

“The wills above be done ! but I would fain die a dry death.”

TEMPEST.

THE voices of the surging waves, which had so wrought upon the delicate nervous organization of the young mother, at the parsonage, were, in reality, the retreating echoes of the storm. For nearly three days, it had raged with almost unexampled violence. The congregated clouds had come down close to earth, big with their impending deluge, and opened their fountains of waters. The hurrying blast seemed instinct with life itself, and imagination shaped it into some monstrous individuality, as it muttered and growled at night through the lampless streets, and ever and anon it shrieked, as it shook the trembling casements with ineffectual fury. Now and then, the gust would rush upon the big drops, as they fell, and fling them, in quick succession, against the rattling panes. Many a fence lay prostrate, and here and there a chimney toppled from its adhesion, and crashed through some ancient roof, or was tumbled piecemeal into the street. The storm made sad havoc with the gardens. Fruit, and flower, and foliage, suffered in the general devastation, and mighty limbs of trees were torn from their parent stems, and flung, a melancholy spectacle, to the ground. In a word, it was the Line Gale !

It had now abated. The rain had ceased. The scud flew, like spectral sails, across the angry-looking heavens. A dreary mist stood upon the steaming earth, and hung, in heavy masses, over the water. Towards evening it had fallen calm.

The wind awoke once more in the night, with sudden violence, as if to blow its parting blast, and bursting, probably, along the current formed by some newly-gathered cloud ; but soon after midnight all again was still.

Mr. Atherton was awake, at a very early hour the next morning, and, as the late weather had seriously interfered with his usual habits of exercise, he arose softly, intending to take a breathing before the family were astir. He had saddled his horse, accordingly, and rode out of the town, through streets which, at that early hour, had scarcely resumed the activities of life. Nature slumbered in profound repose. There was evident promise of a fine day ; though the mist hung drooped in massive folds, over the river, to be seen from the high road, and upon the more distant waters of the bay.

Mr. Atherton was a devoted lover and a student of nature in all her moods ; and, as he listened to the thundering peal of the surf upon the beach, distinctly audible, beneath the quiet of the dawning hour, he quickened the pace of his horse, and pushed forward, with the purpose of getting a glimpse of Ocean, in the throes with which he smooths away the wrinkles of his azure brow. His path led along by the habitations of fishermen and sailors, and here and there some scattered farm-houses, inhabited by a hybrid population of diverse pursuits, stood, at intervals, on the uplands which skirted far-extending meadows.

As he rode along the causeway that led to the sea, he had observed some movements towards the beach ; and upon mounting over the sandy hillocks, which had hitherto concealed the ocean from view, he was surprised to find himself close upon a group of, perhaps, twenty or thirty persons, standing by the edge of the shore.

The occasion of this collection of people, at such an unusual moment, was soon manifest. Through the mist, that was now lifting under the influence of the morning sun, it was easy to distinguish, though imperfectly, the hull of a vessel, stranded

at no great distance from the main land. The foremast apparently had been cut away, or, at all events, was gone by the board. She seemed to be a schooner of more than a hundred tons' burthen, and lay fast imbedded on a shoal of sand, not far from the mouth of the river, and maybe not more than eighty or a hundred yards from the shore. Indeed, this mass of sand was situated nearly at one extremity of a sand-bar, which extended, in a crescent shape, outwards, across the mouth of the river itself, and upon which the sea was now tossing and foaming with impetuous violence. Between the position of the ill-fated vessel and the beach, the outgoing tide set with frightful rapidity. As the waters of the river debouched into the ocean, the current swept swiftly around a headland upon this side of the bay, and, keeping this lateral course, with gradually-diminishing velocity, ran, for a certain distance, nearly parallel with the line of the shore. The tumbling and mingling waves of the ocean, therefore, as they rushed forward to expend their rage, here struck the current, as it might be in flank or crosswise, with irresistible fury; and thus howling and struggling in fierce embrace, they flung themselves prostrate together, with one bursting and savage yell, upon the trembling, and reänswering strand.

In consequence of the position of the vessel, her stern was considerably elevated above the line of her bows; and though the sea frequently made a clear breach over her, and she shook, as it were, convulsively, at every terrible stroke, it was evident that her after-part was far less exposed, than the rest of the vessel, to the full violence of the tremendous and resistless element. Indeed, the storm, as we have remarked, had abated soon after midnight, and the sea itself had partially gone down, or it is probable she would have been entirely engulfed and destroyed long before morning. Far up her main-rigging hung a human being, whose occasional cries, heart-piercing to hear, were yet scarcely audibly articulate, through the roar of the waters. No other sign of life was

visible. The rest of the ship's company, it might well be, had been washed from the deck and instantly perished in the seething waves. To an experienced eye, it was obvious, that she might go to pieces at any moment ; and, indeed, it was a wonder, how the best-built vessel, in such a state, could hold together at all. It was certain she could not have been in that position a great many hours.

As the improving clearness of the atmosphere afforded opportunity to scrutinize her condition more closely, it was apparent that the schooner did not lie broadside to the beach ; but had drifted or been driven, stern-foremost, towards the shore. In fact, she had been forced almost entirely across the narrow spit of sand on which she lay, probably by the force of some single wave ; so that from her stern to her main-chains she seemed really clear ; and the keen eye of a sailor soon discovered that she had one cable, if not two, out forward, so that she had evidently dragged her anchors to this position ; and "these," as he judiciously remarked, "kept her nose down." In reality, therefore, under her stern and part of her quarter, there was a partial lee, though of an aspect so fearful, that no one would be induced to take advantage of it, except on the sailor's doctrine of "any port in storm."

All these circumstances, with the quick and accurate observation of seamen, had been carefully noted, by the men upon the beach, by the time Mr. Atherton had ridden up.

"Is it possible for you to do anything for these poor creatures, my friends?" was his inquiry of heartfelt earnestness.

"Well, sir," said one, touching his hat respectfully, and whom he at once recognized as Captain Benson, one of his congregation, and an enterprising young ship-master of the town, and well known as one of the lieutenants of that famous and fortunate privateer the "Fire-eater," which ran the gauntlet so successfully in a gale of wind, with her flag flying, through an English fleet, off the capes of the Delaware, in the last war, happily brought to a close, not long before, —

“Well, sir,” said Captain Benson, “it’s hardly possible. Boats have lived, perhaps, in as ugly a sea; the chances are against it. But the great trouble is, to get off the beach at all, without swamping her, with such a surf running. Here’s a good boat enough, which they keep in this boat-house, up the shore, in case of accident; but I hardly see how we can make any use of it.”

“I’ve seen sich a job done, though, in the Injy seas, by the Masullah boats, where the rollers allers come in almost,—maybe not quite so bad,—as they do here now,” said one weather-beaten tar, obviously long familiar with

“The battle and the breeze,”

and whose head was decorated with a south-wester, his broad shoulders, with a red baize shirt, and whose hair, gathered into an immense club, depended half way down his back.

“So have I, Jack,” said Captain Benson, “and seen the crews drowned, too, more than once.”

“There’s only one man aboard, as I can see,” observed Jack Holliday, looking at the vessel carefully, with one eye shut, and holding his hand over the other; “but I s’pose life’s as dear to him as any of us; maybe more so, now he’s likely to lose it.”

“I will go with you myself, my friends,” cried Mr. Atherton, leaping from his horse, “if it be possible to undertake the enterprise.”

“Why, as to enterprise, sir,” said Holliday, “I believe Yankee sailors are about as enterprising as anybody. I can pull as good a stroke-oar now as I ever could in my life, and there’s nobody, mayhap, to care much about me, now my old mother’s in heaven; and, sink or swim, I’m ready to go for one, if the captain here’ll undertake to steer the dory.”

“O, sir,” said Captain Benson, in reply to Mr. Atherton, “you must n’t think of it for a moment. Excuse me, sir, but

skill is quite as important here as courage ; and your services are needed elsewhere. As Holliday says, Yankee seamen will do whatever can be done ; and, at least, as old Miller said in the last war, ' I 'll try, sir.' Who 'll go here ? ”

“ My most fervent prayers shall go with you, captain,” said the minister, warmly grasping him by the hand. “ I see that it is very hazardous, but it is our duty to attempt all that is possible to save human life.”

Having resolved to undertake the perilous adventure, the brave seaman was prompt in execution. There was no difficulty in finding a crew, where all were ready to share the common danger ; and, by general consent, he, having been selected to lead the party, chose three other stout fellows, whose qualities he understood, together with Holliday, to accompany him on his dangerous errand. The boat which, for the purpose of meeting such emergencies as might arise, on a coast so exposed to marine disasters, was maintained in a convenient place, by some benevolent individuals or association, under the charge of the light-keeper, was sufficiently well adapted to the purpose. She was light, but well constructed and strong, rather long for her beam, sharp forward and aft, and clinker-built, with her gunwales inclining inwards, and almost as buoyant as an Indian canoe. She was slightly ballasted, however, but had nothing else in her, except lines, which might prove of use, her complement of oars, and the proper utensils for bailing.

“ Now, my lads,” cried the captain, “ we 'll choose the best place we can for shoving her off, and run her down the beach, as far into the surf as will do, and take advantage of it as it goes out. It runs back, you know, in a jiffy. Stand, men, all ready, and when I give the word ‘ Now ! ’ push her into it, and jump for your lives.”

Accordingly, the place and the moment were judiciously selected. Allowing more than one ugly-looking roller to break over their limbs, as not presenting, in their leader's

judgment, the favorable opportunity, and standing bent forward, with their hands firmly grasping the gunwale of the boat, the word at length was suddenly given, and the daring feat as judiciously and skilfully executed. They had tumbled into the boat the moment she floated clear. Wet, of course, to the skin, and their frail bark half filled with water ; she was seen a moment after, tossed and dancing like a feather, upon the boiling and angry wave.

They had all thrown off their upper garments on the beach, and now, with shirt-sleeves rolled to their shoulders, two of the men were pulling for life, the other two were bailing with desperate energy, and the captain, in the stern-sheets, was holding her as hard as possible with his oar.

Scarcely ten minutes had elapsed, from the moment the project was started, until now, that the fragile-looking little thing, scarcely discernible as she fell with the falling wave, was battling with an element of such seeming superiority.

The people on the shore, who had hailed her first appearance on the surface of the water, with a cheer,

“ Not loud, but deep,”

were now watching her further progress with intense interest and anxiety.

“ By Heaven ! they 'll do it ! ” exclaimed one young fellow, who had been ready enough to go with the others, but whom the captain had excluded on the ground, that he was *the only son of his mother, and she was a widow*.

“ I tell you, young man,” said one elderly personage, who might, in fact, be seventy years of age or upwards, and who

“ Mounded, and mounded, and mounded,”

at something in his mouth, which distended his lantern-jaws, when they were still, like a good-sized pebble stone, and whose breast probably had long lost any embers of fire, which might have animated his younger days ; “ I tell you it's

easier to get into a scrape, than 't is to get out of one. I larnt that many a good year ago. My mind is, it's a clear tempting of Providence, and a taking of the work out of the Lord's hands."

"Well, Uncle Josh," was the reply, "we won't talk about scrapes at such a time. I hope I shan't have the benefit of your experience. Heavens! how she jumped over that wave! I only pray Providence will help these good fellows as they deserve!"

It was a beautiful but fearful thing, to witness this mortal conflict between manly courage, and spirit, and intelligence, and skill, on the one side, and, on the other, the blind, tumultuous, terrible energy of the ever awful and too often conquering sea!

No human imagination has been able to contrive an adequate personification of Ocean, bursting and bellowing, in his fury, from his multitudinous caves! Not that howling monster, who hurled the rocks of the mountain after Ulysses and his companions, says aught like him, when he issues from beneath and utters his accents of dread. The cerulean chariot of the god of the ancients may be fancied mounting from its depths, and riding triumphant over the peaceful wave. But when Ocean covers his face with storms, his aspect suggests only that infinite Power, which first created, and at his pleasure pronounces "Be still!"

As the boat passed through the waters, the minister of Eastford stood upon the beach in earnest and audible prayer.

In a moment or two, it was evident, through the partial mist and mingling spray, that the hardy fellows had actually reached the unfortunate vessel, and while two of the men were carefully holding the boat with their oars, a third, with another oar, was at her head to keep her from being dashed against the schooner's side. Apparently, Captain Benson had exchanged places with one of the hands and stooped close in the boat's bows. At some favorable moment, as it seemed,

she was permitted to come as near as safety would permit, and in an instant he had sprung into the chains and taken a turn with the painter, which soon gave the boat more play, and helped also to steady her. It was the work of a very few moments for him to run up the rigging, and to help, in his progress down, the man who had apparently lashed himself in the position indicated. This person seemed able to assist himself somewhat, and, at length, with considerable difficulty, and after two or three unsuccessful efforts, was taken into the boat.

It was now thought that Captain Benson would at once resume his place, and make the best of his only too difficult way to land. To the terror of his friends on shore, who were watching these proceedings with straining eyes, and occasionally spying through a not very serviceable glass, which had been hastily caught up by some one on his way, and which was passed from hand to hand, the gallant seaman had suddenly disappeared. In the midst of their comments and ejaculations, however, he was soon again seen at the schooner's chains, with one arm around the rigging, while at the same time, he held closely towards him some light-colored object, which might be, it was thought, a human being enveloped in a blanket or other bed-clothes. Whatever it was, he had evidently contrived to reef some extempore tackle around it, and finally, by extraordinary exertions of himself and his companions, and after she had several times been permitted to come up and fall off again, the burthen was safely received, and deposited in the bottom of the dancing boat.

It was far less difficult for Captain Benson, active and steady as he was, to assume his own station on board the now more deeply loaded little craft; although, at ordinary times, she was, to be sure, competent to convey a much more numerous company. Her head was now to the shore; and, perhaps, after all, the most dangerous, if not the most difficult part of

the enterprise remained to be accomplished. Indeed, as soon as they left the vessel's side, except for the steersman, and for the purpose of keeping the boat as steady as possible, the oars were entirely useless. It needed in reality but a second, as it seemed, and one or two mighty heaves of the incoming surge, to present that apparently helpless and hopeless company in their frail bark, — now almost submerged, as the lifting wave yielded beneath her pressure, — poised and suspended, as it were, in the very jaws of the combing waters, above the heads of their horror-stricken friends on the shore. Holding fast by a strong line, secured far up, these stood almost at the verge of the shelving bank, and the waters swept over their limbs, as they rushed onwards, or receded from the beach.

The instant and utter destruction of the boat's crew seemed really inevitable. No other final hope could look forlorn like theirs. If there could be a possibility of escape, it was that the shore was very bold at this point, in consequence, no doubt, of the lateral action of the tide, and thus the main force of the surf expended itself upon the almost perpendicular face of beaten sand.

At this moment of terrible uncertainty, one daring fellow stood curled, or was, perhaps, upon his knees, in the bow of the boat. On his arm he held a short coil of rope, which had been knotted to the painter, with, perhaps, some kind of weight attached to its end. As she rushed forward with the impulse of the descending wave, he flung it far and quickly towards the shore. There were ready hands to catch, and, with instant speed, the friends of the devoted crew, with the rope tightened over their shoulders, were springing up the beach. The wave fell! In another instant, the shattered boat and its drenched and half-stunned company were strewn upon the sandy beach, and far from the fury of the baffled and now retiring surge.

CHAPTER VI.

“ We bear her home ! we bear her home !
Over the murmuring salt-sea foam.”

BARRY CORNWALL.

“ And all my knowledge is, that joy is gone,
And this thing, woe, crept in among our hearts,
There to remain forever, as I fear.”

KEATS.

But the men were soon again upon their feet, being more or less accustomed to hard thumpings; and the lady, — for lady it proved to be, with a feebly-wailing infant closely pressed to her bosom, — seemed herself to be suffering more from exhaustion and fear, than from the violence of the shock. In fact, at the moment of that fearful plunge, Jack Holliday had seized the helpless burthen in his arms; and, having thus partially put himself *hors de combat*, had sustained, in his own broad and tough person, the principal force of the concussion, and came off, as he chose to put the case, “ cheap enough, with only a broken arm.” Amongst the rest were distributed, to be sure,

“ Bloody noses and cracked crowns ; ”

the latter, however, only metaphorically, since no one made complaint of serious injury, and nobody pressed them to further developments.

The lady, with the child, was speedily and tenderly conveyed to the nearest dwelling-house, about half a mile distant, extended upon a pea-jacket, converted into a litter for the occasion, four stout fellows holding the several corners. The

party was received by the good woman, the farmer's wife, with ready and somewhat voluble hospitality. One of her sons, at least, had been with the men upon the beach, and had assisted in bringing the patient to her house.

"Massy sake alive!" cried the good-natured and rather portly dame, meeting the procession at the door, and quite as much flurried, perhaps, by the unusual assemblage, as alarmed at an incident which she did not yet fully understand, and giving vent first to her maternal feelings, — "Massy sake alive, John! where have you been all the morning, without your breakfast? What! a lady drowned! O, come in! — yes, indeed! Fetch the poor body in. Lord-a-massy! What! and a dear little drowned baby, too! O, dear! Here, Betty, you great oaf, stir round, and do something or other. Fetch her right into the kitchen, — this way, folks, where the fire is. Put her into father's great chair, till I get the bed ready. You, Bet, why don't you do something? Lor, I declare, if this an't Mr. Atherton! How *do* you do, sir? Let me wipe a seat. I hope you'll sit down in the house, sir!"

A comfortable bed for the suffering lady was soon ready, and a rousing fire, constructed principally or altogether of dry wreck-stuff, by the hands of Bet, was quickly burning on the hearth. Upon stripping off, with the assistance of a female neighbor or two who had come in, the heavy and soaking garments of the sufferer, to replace them with such other clothing as could be had, — while Bet, a bouncing lass of twenty, out of some reserved store of her own, probably, performed the same kind offices for the infant near the fire, — and, upon wiping and slightly arranging her bewildered hair, she evidently appeared, even in her present disordered condition,

—— "a lady fair to see,
Beautiful exceedingly."

It would be so unfair to her, however, to enter into particu-

lars upon this subject, in her present dishevelled circumstances, that we feel bound to defer this pleasurable task to a more favorable opportunity.

Indeed, it is high time that our friend Mr. Atherton, who has been as kind and attentive to the young lady (for she was also young) as the warmest heart in the world could prompt him to be, was looking a little after matters at his own fire-side. Accordingly, having stated his intention to return speedily with a physician, he mounted his horse, which a lad, who led him up from the beach, had held at the door (for he had himself walked by the side of the litter), and rode sharply along the causeway, on his road to Eastford.

But, before he arrives there, it would be well to explain one or two points, upon which this narrative has hitherto omitted to dwell. The reason of Captain Benson's appearance, and of the gathering described upon the shore, at so early an hour, was this. The captain had been anxious, during the gale, on account of a vessel, with a valuable cargo, in which he was considerably interested; in fact, the schooner "Sally Forth," now daily expected home from the West Indies, and which was rather too much out of time. During the lull of the afternoon before, he had driven down to the beach, at early evening, and had there learned, from one of those characters who are always to be found loitering about such places, some story of a vessel indistinctly seen through the misty storm, shaken apart for a moment; and, according to the account, she was anchored in a situation, which, if the wind should blow heavily during the night, might well give occasion for considerable apprehension. Now, the "Sally Forth" was not insured. Having, therefore, talked the affair over, more or less, with certain friends and adherents, upon his return to town, and having made such appointments as were convenient, with some of them, to go down with him early in the morning, he had passed a night of very little sleep, especially when the gale recommenced before midnight; and one or two near

friends, and some sailors, who had been voyages with him, or expected to sail with him again, had met him on the beach ; and with them had come together people from the water-side, whom they had called for on their way, besides a few of such occasional stragglers as are always looking out for the consequences to be seen, and, perhaps, picked up, on the heel of a storm, by carefully tending the sea-shore.

The stranded vessel, however, did not prove to be the "Sally Forth" (which staunch schooner, it may as well be stated here, safely arrived, some days later, deeply laden with an assorted cargo of sugar and coffee, and a certain quantity of molasses, all then commanding a high price), but was a vessel, flour-loaded, called a "packet," from her taking an occasional passenger or so, and was from the port of Philadelphia, bound east. The man, saved from the rigging, was her master. As was too truly feared, all others of the ship's company had perished ! She had got caught in the gale, and had made a hard struggle to keep off. She had, however, been finally driven into the bay, and had come to anchor, with both cables out, not far from the position mentioned to Captain Benson by his informant of the previous evening. The ground was not good to hold ; she was altogether too close in, and had dragged, and gone on in the night, during the final burst of the gale.

The master had informed Captain Benson that there was a female below. With little hope of being able to save her, if alive, or even to get below at all, he had, nevertheless, hastened to make the attempt, and soon found that, though the schooner was nearly full of water, yet, in consequence of the comparative elevation of her stern, it was hardly up to his armpits at the foot of the companion-way, and diminished in depth, as he ascended towards the after part of the vessel. The berth in which he discovered the lady, certainly more dead than alive, was so far aft, that the water had not reached it, except when some roll of the vessel would dash a portion of it over her person. It was no time for words, scarcely for

reflection. A rope he had brought with him from the boat, which he had previously made fast to the schooner's shrouds, and which he had led along with him into the cabin, to serve not only, like the labyrinthine thread, as a clue, but also, if need were, as a stay and helper, by which to regain the deck. With this line passed more than once around his own body, and so attached to the shrouds of the vessel, he had secured the free action of both his arms, as he stood upon the schooner's main-chains; and then, as he used to say, "he scarcely knew how," he had managed to hand the lady and her infant, to which she clung convulsively, wrapped together in the blankets of her berth, to one of the men below, as the boat rose upon the waves, and thus succeeded, with great difficulty, in getting the half-lifeless but precious burden into the frail and tossing barque.

In the mean time, the parsonage at Eastford had been in a state of no little agitation, if not alarm. The breakfast hour was long passed. It was known, of course, that Mr. Atherton must have ridden out, as his horse was gone from the stable. No anxiety was felt in regard to his absence, until the morning had advanced an hour or more beyond the usual period of that morning meal. And then conjecture began to be busy, and gradually thickened and darkened into a vague apprehension, and the minutes grew to be hours. Mrs. Atherton could scarcely endure her painful feelings. Little Georgy had often inquired, —

"Mamma, why don't dear papa come home?"

And she had folded the child to her breast in silent anguish. The maid-servant had come in, more than once, with the announcement, "Ma'am, the cakes will be all spiled;" and, finally, "Ma'am, they're burnt to a cinder." But to eat without her husband was now out of the question. Unable to rest longer without conference with a friend, she had, at length, sent for her father.

"My dear Julia," said Dr. Walton, kissing his daughter

as he entered, and hearing the statement of her distress, "surely your alarm for your husband is entirely gratuitous. You are only nervous, and have allowed yourself to become unnecessarily wrought up. Mr. Atherton has gone out for a morning ride, that is evident, and, probably, the fine weather after the storm has tempted him to ride further than he intended. He is inclined to be a little absent-minded at times, you know, my love, and, in enjoying nature, has forgotten, for the moment, what he professes to consider one of her most charming pieces of workmanship."

"O, no, my dear father! you are only flattering me to try to amuse me and divert my attention. You know he never forgets; he prides himself on being punctual; it's the only thing that sometimes disturbs me a little. And then he never does forget me; and he is so regularly at home, and never will even spend a night away; and he knows how anxious I shall be about him; and — O, I'm sure something dreadful must have happened!" Sobs had interrupted, and now choked, Mrs. Atherton's speech.

"Nonsense! my child; I beg you to use your good sense to control a little your excited feelings."

"Massa Atterton find some poor sick body want him good ways off," suggested a sympathizing voice at the door, recognized at once as that of Black Nance, an occasional inmate of the minister's kitchen, who now poked her woolly head inside of the apartment, arrayed in a handkerchief, in which the brilliant color of yellow predominated, and put in her word of comfort.

This person was, in fact, a negress of extraordinary height and size, as well as of extraordinary character. Her appearance might signify her age to be not much, if any, beyond the middle period of life. Her complexion, though not of the blackest, was dark enough to indicate that she had little, and perhaps no mixture of blood in her veins. She had discovered that her uncommon size and remarkable aspect (for she

might be called fine-looking) were calculated to inspire awe amongst the youngsters and the more superstitious portion of the community; and she had improved this influence to the best of her ability. Her gait, like Catiline's, as described by Sallust, was now quick, now slow; and she would change from one style of motion to the other with singular and unaccountable rapidity. She would also come to a sudden stand in the street, and, with a graceful movement of her arms, and a stately turn of her head, would roll her eyes about, as if gazing upon vacancy, or something not visible to other human organs of sight; and thereupon would start off suddenly, at a pace, as if — to use an expression attributed to Dick Western, the stable-boy — “she was —— bent,” Dick profanely supplying the hiatus with a syllable not to be mentioned “to ears polite.”

“What! are you there? What do you know about it, Nancy?” said the doctor.

“Don't Nance see de minister come home agin, all bright and handsome as ever? Some folks know something, too, well as other folks.”

“You think you see a good many things nobody else can, Nance! I can't tell why the minister harbors you here. But, if you see so much, I wish you would tell us where he is now, — there 'd be some sense in that.”

This was an unlucky speech; for it shook his daughter's confidence in the judgment he had given, and set her out again.

“O, father!” she cried, “I know you are only trying to comfort me. I know you think about it just as I do! I'm sure ——”

“Horse-tramp; hear him come, now!” broke in Nance, with her strong, but not unmusical voice.

In fact, her acuter senses had enabled her first to distinguish what soon became audible to others, the clatter of hoofs along the street, and, in another moment, Mr. Atherton threw

his bridle over a post, and, hot from his ride, entered the apartment, and his wife flung herself upon his breast.

Joy for the recovered treasure seemed to obliterate, for the moment, the memory of its recent loss. But Mr. Atherton hastily explained the cause of his detention, and proposed to Dr. Walton to accompany him back immediately to the house of farmer Joslin.

“O, my dear fellow, that won't do at all! Three or four hours of such service are quite enough for one morning; and, as I suppose you have had no breakfast, I was just about ordering you a calefacient, in the shape of a cup of coffee.”

“How thoughtless I am! and I know I must have seemed very foolish,” said Mrs. Atherton, wiping her eyes, to which the reflux of her feelings had brought those pleasant tears which relieve and quiet the heart. “But I'll not consent to your going down again to this awful scene. You look as pale as death now, and ought to have rest, instead of more excitement, and you not very well either.” And now, getting into good spirits, — “No, I don't think I can spare you out of my sight again at present. I mean to watch you a good deal hereafter, — O, so close, you can't think! — and to take care you shall not go off again in a hurry, on any knight-errant expeditions after drowning ladies. But how did the poor soul look? You have told us nothing about it. I've an idea that people taken from the water are frightful spectacles. Is she young or old?”

“Quite young, — not so old as yourself, I should think.”

“Indeed! Not really good-looking, was she?”

“Very handsome, I assure you.”

“Dear me! It's really high time some one were seeing into this affair. I must be trying to discover whether Nancy, here, or some other deep personage, has not given you an intimation that a ‘quite young’ and ‘very handsome’ lady was all ready to be rescued from drowning this morning by the gay and gallant — minister of Eastford!”

“ I did not rescue her, my love; it was Captain Benson. And now that Polly has brought in the breakfast, — for which, I confess, I feel a reasonable appetite, — let me tell you I should not be surprised, from such inspection as I could make of the features of this lady, if she proved to be an old acquaintance of your own.”

“ A friend of mine! Who can it be?”

“ I said an acquaintance, not a friend, Julia. In my opinion, she will be very likely to turn out to be Susan Bell, of the ‘ Upper Village,’ who was considered so very pretty, and whose father removed to Pennsylvania several years since.”

“ Susan Bell!”

“ Yes; and whom young May was so desperate for, and followed, and married, after her father’s failure.”

“ I believe her father did not long survive his misfortunes,” said the doctor.

“ So I have heard. I do not positively assert, that I recognized her to be Mrs. May. She was scarcely able to open her eyes, or to speak. She has been away some time, and the faces of pretty girls make a very transient impression on me, you know, Jule?”

“ Yes,” — rather dryly, and looking a little cunning.

“ Let me see, — I think she has no near relations here, now, except her mother’s sister, Miss Sybil Dudley,” observed Dr. Walton, who had seated himself at the table with the family, and “ improved upon ” (as he expressed it) his early breakfast, followed by professional avocations, by a liberal slice of broiled salmon, which he was now devouring, and a stout cup of coffee. In fact, the breakfast proved to be excellent, notwithstanding Polly’s depreciatory statement, and, indeed, Mr. Atherton preferred the cakes “ well done.” Little Georgy had been upon his father’s knee, proposing several questions, often easier to ask than to answer.

“ I think she has none,” said he, “ and it never occurred to

me before ; but it would be well for me to ride up, and inform that lady of this calamity immediately."

"Certainly. In the mean time I will get out my chaise, instead of the sulky, and follow you to her house, to take her down with me, as, no doubt, she will be anxious to be with her niece immediately ; that is, if a maiden lady of a certain age has no objections to riding alone with a widower of my standing."

"A lady may have objections, and not make them, father, according to circumstances."

"Yes, and she may make them, but not have them ! But *de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*. I'll bother you with a little Latin, in payment of your criticism ; and so, good-morning to you, Madam Julia Atherton."

We sincerely trust, that none of our judicious readers will be so uncharitable as to imagine, because Mrs. Atherton had been so disturbed by her husband's not very prolonged absence, that she was, therefore, a lady given to hysterical affections. Far from it. But, besides that the circumstance was so unusual as to be really extraordinary, her condition, as has been before intimated, was now one of peculiar delicacy, more or less affecting the feminine nervous system. She was, in fact, only a devoted and true-hearted wife, full of strong and warm feelings, and loving her husband with an old-fashioned and unhesitating affection. But, in point of general firmness of character, and sound, genuine good sense, she was not surpassed by any lady, with whom we have had the pleasure and happiness to be acquainted. It is to be remembered, also, that she had been somewhat stirred up by worthy Mrs. Dowling, the evening before. That good lady occasionally afterward (though never to Mrs. Atherton,—the minister took care of that) shook her head very mysteriously, when the wreck was mentioned, and hinted at her broken mirror, as the "forerunner;" though, as she had neither chick nor child, kith nor kin, on board the vessel, the reason of the warning to her especially has continued to this day an unexplained enigma.

CHAPTER VII.

“ *Shallow.* — How a good yoke of bullocks at Stamford fair? — How a score of ewes now?

“ *Silence.* — Thereafter as they be.” — SHAKESPEARE.

“ O fool! to think God hates the worthy mind,
The lover and the love of human kind,
Whose life is healthful and whose conscience clear,
Because he wants a thousand pounds a year.”

POPE.

MRS. ATHERTON was naturally anxious to be informed of all further particulars, in regard to the condition of the young and pretty Mrs. May. Far be it from us to impute this laudable desire on the part of that most sweet lady to feminine curiosity. We are not of that acrid class of dealers with poor human nature, who believe that all its conduct must have some selfish motive at the bottom. As Dr. Johnson once well remarked, in effect, these persons, by imputing universal baseness to mankind, at least convict themselves. We loathe, and scorn, and detest all such imputations, especially in regard to the fair sex, who are well known to have “borne and forborne,” often under the most provoking circumstances, and in innumerable instances to have been found capable of the most generous and self-sacrificing conduct. Leigh Hunt relates a story, of his mother having once stripped off her flannel petticoat, when it is to be inferred petticoats were scarce with her, in order to put it around the limbs of a poor shivering creature, whose wants had enlisted her sympathies, and who seemed to need as much to be made

warm, as to be filled. And, upon our faith and honor as a veritable historian, we are familiar with a precisely similar incident, between a poor berry-woman and an American lady, who had never heard of Leigh Hunt or his excellent mother ; thus showing that feminine feelings are as spontaneously and specifically kind in one part of the habitable globe as another.

We believe Mrs. Atherton's motives, therefore, to have been entirely pure and disinterested ; and, her spirits having revived, and her husband's strength being much recruited, she made no further objection to his proceeding upon the proposed excursion.

His horse, an entirely steady roadster, becoming his cloth, had, in the mean time, been properly cared for, by his boy Tom ; for he was not a man to provide for his own necessities and neglect those of his beast. Accordingly, by the time Dr. Walton drove gallantly up, with Miss Sibyl Dudley demurely seated at his left hand, Mr. Atherton was entirely ready for the road. Miss Dudley's handkerchief was at her eyes, but she was a woman of a good deal of spirit, and had evidently made a strong effort to brace herself up for the occasion. Her bonnet, we would inform our female friends, was a black straw, and the shawl around her shoulders of a dark-gray hue, bordered and fringed with black. In fact, she still wore these colors in memory of her deceased brother, whose death had afflicted her deeply ; and, with the exception of his child, she now stood almost the last relic of a family long and highly respected.

Without alighting from the chaise, the party started together ; and it required but half an hour's sharp driving, over a road not all of it in the best condition, to bring them to the house of farmer Joslin. Indeed, part of the way lay through Long-lane, which was then, and still is, quite narrow, and bordered, as is well known, with overhanging apple-trees ; and a portion of which was little better than a bridle-path, or, at most, a drift-way. Still, as it opened upon the main-

road, at both extremities, it was a favorite drive, and even walk, with the young people of Eastford; and thither they often repaired, late in the spring, when the apple-trees were in full bloom, or during the summer afternoon, when twilight began to throw its charming and soothing shadows over the scene, and the voices of birds were sweet, returning to their evening nests. Indeed, it was a most rural and romantic path. And some of the happiest families at Eastford are said to date the dawn of their subsequent felicity from tender emotions, conceived and interchanged, during twilight or moonlight strolls along that delightfully suggestive road.

Mr. Joslin's house stood about a quarter of a mile up this lane, and but a few rods from the stone-wall which skirted the road. The house itself was of a description common enough to the times and the situation; and though much exposed, in so close neighborhood to the sea, yet, except in height, not differing much from the ordinary farm-houses of inland towns — that is, it was a story and a half high, and not of very ample dimensions. Of course, it was built of wood, and its walls, as well as the shingles which covered its roof, and which were, here and there, brightened with a patch of moss, were blackened by time and the storm. The rather shabby-looking barn stood at no very great distance, by the open door of which — no, that was a little later in the season, when we observed an enormous pyramid of yellow pumpkins, interspersed with squashes of a great variety of shapes and dimensions. Pigeons, however, were now wheeling over the roof of the barn, and settling, from time to time, along its eaves and upon the ridge-pole.

Within, there was but the kitchen, the "keeping-room," and a pantry, together with the principal sleeping apartment, upon the lower floor; and it seemed as if the further accommodations for the necessary refreshment of nocturnal repose must be on a somewhat limited scale above. Many of the domestic offices of the household were performed upon the stoop or

lean-to, commonly called *linter*, which faced the south. Although the building was of a moderate age, apparently the owner had not yet had the leisure, or else the means, properly to finish some portions of the interior, for the laths on the walls of the entrance and the pantry were not even covered with plaster. A mirror, which made up in showiness what it lacked in value, was suspended between the windows, not all the panes of which were whole. A seaman's chest, painted blue, occupied a place on one side of the kitchen, and a large mahogany folding-desk held an opposite position. Over the high mantel-piece was a miniature schooner, of the class known as a "pink," "jigger," or "chebacco boat," not very skilfully carved, it is presumed, with a jack-knife, and fitted with rather clumsy-looking sails of coarse cotton. An agricultural implement or two leaned against the corners, or stood in some part of the passage-way, in which hung a pair of fisherman's boots and a barvel. On the whole, rather an air of discomfort pervaded the inside of the establishment. There was an entire absence of taste, and no little want of care.

The interior, as well as exterior, of a thriving New England farmer's premises, in our day, indicates usually rather a pride of neatness, and, commonly, the possession of substantial comfort. In general, everything about his household glares only too much with the glitter of paint, which would be much more agreeable, if it were somewhat sobered down. For, although white and green colors mingle prettily enough together, yet, it must be observed that nature seldom presents these very marked and rectangular contrasts. Her fields, and hills, and pastures, and rocks, and trees, are really toned by a subdued and blended tint. And even the soft and delicate whiteness of her silvery birch only, here and there, diversifies the grayer glories of its forest companions.

As we have observed, there was certainly no waste of paint, or striking contrast of colors, on the house of Mr.

Joslin, which presented, on the outside, only that hue, which time and the elements had combined to communicate. Within, it was equally unconscious of extrinsic aid. To do Mrs. Joslin justice, her interior was reasonably clean (for want of neatness is not a New England failing); that is, it was, as she said, "as clean as she could keep it. These men were so dirty and so careless, it war n't of much use trying; but there! she did her best, and what could a woman do more? She might scrub, and scrub, and scrub, — but 't was jest about as dirty, next day, as 't was afore!"

The too promiscuous character of the occupations pursued by the inmates tended very much, no doubt, to produce a good deal of that appearance of neglect which we have indicated. At a season of the year when their services were needed on the farm, one or more of "the boys" would be absent, for a longer or shorter period, as sharesman in some fishing-trip to Labrador or the Banks. And living as they did, in rather a hodge-podge manner, keeping little account amongst themselves, but all deriving some benefit from the mutual acquisitions, the farmer could hardly refuse the young men the opportunity, which these voyages often afforded, of securing the only ready cash they were likely to obtain, for their fitting-out on their several paths of life. Nor is it likely that they were, when at home, as ready and efficient helpers as they might otherwise have been. A blue jacket ill consorts with a farmer's frock; and in this way more labor was thrown upon the head of the family, than he well knew how to dispose of. But all the thoughts and feelings of the boys centred in "home;" to them it had associations and charms, which a stranger meddled not with; and a new gown to "mother," or "Bet," and perhaps some pecuniary aid afforded to "father," when taxes or other dues were required, in hard times, made all as easy as could be expected, under the circumstances.

Upon the arrival of our friends, Mr. Joslin, a tall and

rather gaunt-looking man, his shock of gray hair covered with a chip hat, and wearing a farmer's frock of blue-striped cotton stuff, accompanied by one of the boys, stood in the doorway, as if to bar the entrance of the coming guests. This was by no means his purpose or wish, however, but only in accordance with a not uncommon Yankee practice, of standing stiffly in a doorway, which is really intended for the ingress and egress of people, rather than for any such inconvenient use.

On the contrary, without in the least altering his position, though he bobbed his head, in token of hospitality and respect, he really welcomed the party to his domicile, offering his hard hand, rather hesitatingly, first wiping it a little on the breast of his frock. He had traded more or less with the gentleman, perhaps with the lady.

"Happy to see you, Mr. Atherton, sir. O, how do you do, doctor? The lady 'll come in, I hope. Very pretty day, ma'am, after the storm. The poor young woman's easy, they say, now; she's had a dreadful hard time of it. But I'm glad you're come, for I don't know nothing about sich cases, and our women folks have been in a terrible fluster."

"Has she been asleep?" inquired the doctor, as he hitched his horse, an operation of which neither the host nor his son made any offer to relieve him.

"Don't know about that, — b'lieve not. Miss Goodwin — Captain Goodwin's wife, up here — come over, and wanted to give her something or other; some sort o' yarb drink, I b'lieve; but I told our folks she should n't take none of their stuff, and I would n't have no tampering with the young woman, till the doctor come and see himself what's good for her."

"I wish everybody had as much sense," replied Dr. Walton, as he entered the house, whither his companions had preceded him. Leaving them to await his judgment upon

the patient, and marshalled by Mrs. Joslin herself, he entered the apartment where the guest lay, and which communicated with the kitchen. After a due interval, he appeared at the door, and beckoned Miss Dudley to accompany him into the bed-room.

“I was away this morning,” said Mr. Joslin to Mr. Atherton, “when all this happened; for I’d gone out to see about gittin in the rowen, and so I did n’t know nothing about the matter, till our John come over the field and told me what was goin on. It’s been a pesky bad storm, sir; I never see it blow harder. Vessels sometimes go ashore here — not very often; mostly they get off, after the blow; and sometimes they’re all drowned. But it’s curious how they got her out; — there! ’t was a right smart job, that ’ere.”

“It was indeed a most wonderful and providential escape,” replied the minister.

“Miss Goodwin seemed to have an idee she’d seen the young woman, up in town somewhere or other; for her life she can’t tell where. But, there, it can’t be, I told her; for this schooner don’t hail from here at all, but comes from somewhere south, — I believe from Philadelphia.”

“It may be so,” said Mr. Atherton, musing. “How has the season been with you, Mr. Joslin?”

“Well, can’t say much for it. Potatoes is good; whites better ’n or’nary; long reds almost always turn out fair. I meant to bring you up a bag of the whites, sir; other sarse is reasonable; corn is poor. I did think we should have a murth of it this year, but the summer’s been a leetle too cold a good deal of the time, and Injin corn, you know, sir, must have a hot sun and plenty of it. How’s *your* health been, sir; and the folks to hum?”

“Comfortable, I thank you. You used a word just now, Mr. Joslin, which I am quite sure I never heard before, when you were speaking of the corn-crop.”

“Do tell! Well, I declare, that’s cur’ous!” scratching his head; “I thought you knew all the words in the dictionary. Word! I don’t know what word it was, though.”

“Something you said, which sounded like *mirth*, when you were speaking of the corn.”

“O, yes! murth, — yes, murth of corn; I always say so: my father always used to, and gran’f’ther too.”

“What do you take it to mean?”

“Why, I always thought it meant a good crop; at any rate, I should n’t call it a murth this year, — haw, haw, haw!”

“I never heard the word before. How has your own health been, Mr. Joslin?”

“Well, I can’t say much for it. I did n’t feel exactly right in the spring of the year; and then, I was n’t very smart all through cucumber-time; but I got better, and then got most down again with rheumatiz; but I got over that; and now, I’ve got a sort of bad finger; there, you can see where it’s swelled up. Still I keep a doin’ all the time. Fact is, I have to work most too much for a man of my years, and the times is so hard, if you stop doin’ you stop goin’, right away.”

“You have some good land here, I should think, Mr. Joslin.”

“Yes, it’s a good farm; a dreadful good farm, if ’t was only well cared for. But I tell my wife I’ve a notion of sellin’ out here, and packin’ up and goin’ off to the Ohio.”

“That’s a very long journey and a wild country, Mr. Joslin.”

“So I hear; but there an’t land enough here for all of ’em to live on, and I might take one or two of the boys with me and set ’em out well in the back settlements.”

“Would you be willing to go into the wilderness, Mr. Joslin?”

Such was Mr. Atherton’s question; and such, at that

period, was the general character of that vast north-western territory, then known under the general appellation of "the Ohio," to which the tide of eastern emigration was rapidly setting. Indeed, the name of wilderness might have been well applied, at that time, to a great portion of the Ohio itself, now containing a population of two millions, distributed amongst its beautiful cities and within its extended domains. And the journey thither from the eastern borders of New England, forty years ago, was really more difficult and tedious, than it would be now to the very foot of the Rocky Mountains themselves.

"Well, sir," was Mr. Joslin's reply, "we Yankees must keep steppin'. I'm e'ena'most tired of this, and I *should* recly like to see a new country; where, they say, a man can git a livin' almost for nothin', and nobody to molest him, only the Injins and the bears, and they won't trouble you much, if you take care and don't trouble them."

Upon the reëppearance of Dr. Walton, all doubts, if any existed, in regard to the identity of the rescued lady with Mrs. May, were dispelled. Miss Dudley had informed him, when he called at her house, that she was expecting her niece by water; and the fact, that she would prove to be the lady saved from the stranded vessel, seemed only too probable, to admit of her hesitating to accompany him at once to the scene. The excellent doctor pronounced his patient to be doing well.

"All she needs, my dear sir," he said, taking Mr. Ather-ton aside, "is rest, and a fair opportunity to recover from what has been unquestionably a severe shock. In some sense, it is like coming back from the grave, for the poor creature can have had little hope of safety. These people are kind, but it is best she should be where she can receive the attentions of old friends. Familiar faces and forms, the voice of recognized affection, and even a well-known step, have a wonderful influence in these cases. After the com-

posing draught, which I have administered, has had its proper effect, I see no reason why she may not be removed to her aunt's residence, this very afternoon."

"And in regard to the infant, sir?"

"O, the young one will do well enough. A little unusual exposure is pretty much all it has had to endure. It's really astonishing how much these little things will bear, tender as they are! I suppose that unconsciousness really saves them from much, which aggravates the hardships of older people. We bring up our children to anything but Spartan hardihood. Why, sir, I've known a poor woman take a baby, of six months, with her to some muster, or some idle show, with which she had no earthly concern, and keep it exposed to a raw wind a whole afternoon; and I never knew the little creature come to any harm, though very likely it did. But there's a mean in these things, sir, there's a mean. *In medio tutissimus* is generally good sense."

Leaving Miss Dudley, therefore, with her niece, the gentlemen departed, having agreed to make arrangements for a carriage to come down, in the course of the afternoon.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Sweet dimness of the sacred room,
I hail thy chaste and sober gloom !
I feel the breeze of mental health,
Where calm content and order dwell ;
The fulness of the poor man’s wealth,
The freedom of his prison-cell.”

GOETHE.

“ Adversity is like the period of the former and of the latter rain,— cold, comfortless, unfriendly to man and to animal; yet from that season have their birth the flower and the fruits, the date, the rose and the pomegranate.” — THE TALISMAN.

THIS casual absence of Miss Dudley affords us now an opportunity to make a more minute examination of her residence, than we should think decorous, in regard to the sacred home of a maiden-lady, of mature years, in her presence, or unless by special invitation. On the absolute point of age, however, we have really no certain means of information. Miss Dudley was unmarried, and a modest woman; of course, she said nothing whatever on the subject. We have known those who, at a certain period of life, — say, at a time when they chose to call themselves twenty-five, or at most thirty, — would seem to come to a stand. With them, either the years did not move at all, or the months possessed a singularly expansive power, and grew very much longer than any term, which the calendar imputes to them; so that, really; a year might seem to hold, within its mortal round, not merely twelve months, but actually, in some instances, even twelve times

twelve, and so on, to another stop ; and thus, from these occasional resting-places, the leaps downward were tremendous, instead of a gradual gentle descent towards that final decrepitude and decay, which no longer admit of the possibility of fiction.

But Miss Dudley, on the other hand, neither conversed about her own age, nor made any false pretences. Her dress was always quiet, and full as old as her apparent years warranted. Her spirits were uniformly cheerful. Her complexion wore the hue of health, not robust, but delicately lady-like and soft. Her heart had lost none of its youthful warmth and vigor, and her whole appearance was so unaffectedly pleasing, that nobody ever thought or cared whether she were young or old.

No contrast could be more complete, than that which existed between the air of her house and that which gave its character to the dwelling-place of Mr. Joslin. Her virgin bower was a structure of a much later date, than the other habitation, and of far neater aspect. Its appearance certainly was not prim or formal, but compact, convenient and attractive, and gave one the idea of respectability in very moderate circumstances. In size, it was hardly adapted to serve more than the special purposes of its innate, and for the accommodation of one, or perhaps, upon a pinch, two, not very frequent guests. From the front, and upon one side, a passage-way extended the entire length of the house, and opened upon the garden by a glass door. From the passage-way, which was decorated with several rather dingy and not very well-executed portraits, doors communicated with the several apartments.

Further than this, in respect of the interior, we dare not go. As to the outside, the house faced the south. On its eastern exposure, honeysuckles, of several varieties, ran on light trellises, and roses were trained upon the walls, and, in their season, presented a spectacle of incomparable beauty,

as, with lovely and blended hues, they covered the entire side of the building, and fell in profuse clusters over the eaves. On the other side, a slender piazza extended, which afforded no very expansive prospect, by reason of rising grounds in the neighborhood; but it enjoyed an uninterrupted view of that most glorious of all the magnificent aspects of nature,— the western evening sky.

In fact, the sun was just sinking, in a blaze of glory, behind the gently-swelling ground, when the carriage drove up to the gate, which guarded the path to the house. The vehicle was driven by the skilful hands of Dick Western, who might be said to be a natural coachman, so kindly did he take to the reins. Under the ban of repeated interdictions, he had repressed, in the most exemplary manner, his native vivacity and natural desire to display his Jehuish accomplishments; and he now repaid himself for his virtue, by a crack so portentous, that it brought Miss Dudley's house-maid precipitately to the gate, and scattered, in dismay, several little boys, who were playing marbles in the street.

We perceive no objection to our now peeping into the chamber, to which "Aunt Sibyl" at once conducted her pretty niece. Of this apartment, it would be seen that the furniture was of a uniform color and extremely plain, except one large easy-chair, covered with shining patch, and that the counterpane of the uncurtained bed was of white dimity, and neatly and tastefully frilled. On the wall hung the portrait of a gentleman, in powdered hair and black velvet clothes, with a silver-hilted small-sword by his side, seated at a writing-table, on which was impictured a letter, superscribed to "The Honorable Shubael Dudley, Esquire, etc. etc. etc." The windows of the chamber looked into the small and neat garden, which was devoted almost exclusively to the culture of flowers. There were currants and gooseberries, however, in great plenty, and more than one peach-tree, its irregular growth sustained by necessary props, and even now a St.

Michael's pear hung loaded with its delicious fruit, whose spots of deeper red mottled and heightened its general golden hue. The house, which we have described, occupying a position a little elevated, stood quite by itself, being, in fact, surrounded by fields upon three sides, the fourth looking towards the high road. From this it was partially concealed, in summer, by a variety of shrubs, bordering the paths, and by clumps of ornamental trees, several of them yielding flowers, and which were tastefully and judiciously disposed.

Miss Dudley had lived here, for several years, upon a very moderate income, only sufficient for her own respectable maintenance and the performance of those constant and unostentatious acts of charity, in which she found it pleasant and useful to indulge. The ladies of "St. Andrews' Sewing Circle," and one or two other charitable societies, connected with the church of which she was a member, and of which the Rev. Dr. Mountain was, at that time, rector, had found her entirely averse to accepting office among them,—though the most honorable and conspicuous positions had been repeatedly pressed upon her,—for the reason, as she alleged, that far more suitable persons might be found; but, in our opinion, because her tastes and habits led her rather to avoid than to incur notoriety. By her unfailing contributions, and personal labors, and ready visits to the poor and the sick, she rendered such services as she thought were due, from such means as she possessed and her comparatively unincumbered situation; and her charities, we may remark, were rather special than general. She spent her leisure moments in reading works of standard value, and, often, poets, whose writings, as she said, ennobled her emotions and spiritualized her soul; or novelists, whose productions, she alleged, awakened, cultivated and enlarged her character; and one book, of course, had her daily and devout attention. Her solitary and yet occupied life had contributed to make her an early riser, and she might often be seen, of a morning, engaged, with her own well-gloved

hands, upon her plants and flowers; which attention she devoted, as well from sincere love of the garden, as for the sake of the healthful and innocent employment it afforded.

“What stranger cause, yet unexplored,” had so long kept a lady, universally acknowledged as one of the most estimable, cultivated and elegant, of the good society of Eastford, in a state of virgin solitude, had often excited speculation, but still remained a mystery and a marvel. So little had she mingled, since the days of her girlhood, in such general society as Eastford possessed, and so subdued was her manner, in the course of any conversation of which she chose to partake, in promiscuous company, that the young men of the town complained, they felt scarcely acquainted with Miss Dudley; and, indeed, it required the consciousness of far more and better founded pretensions, than most of them enjoyed, to enable them to feel entirely at ease within the charmed circle of her rare and intimate associates. I am speaking now of a somewhat earlier period of her life. As a girl, though always inclined to be thoughtful, upon any occasion of merriment she was as light-hearted as the gayest of her girlish companions. Time had now somewhat mellowed her character, and brought out again the warm sincerity of her youthful feelings, while it had tempered, at least, an unaccountable gravity, which seemed to shadow one long interval of her days of bloom. During this interval,

“More frequent at confessional,
More rare at masque and festival,”

might have been remarked of her, had she been a Romanist, and had such exhibitions as confessionals and masques been known or countenanced in the good town of Eastford. As it was, she appeared more constantly than ever, if possible, at church, and seldom, if ever, at the parties given by the inhabitants. To be sure, she did not remain, during the whole period, at Eastford; but spent some time with friends at a

distance, and a portion of it, at least, with her mother's relatives in Oxton. Her father had been long dead; and, upon the decease of her mother, leaving her some decent fortune, for a single lady, she had continued in her native place, and taken the house we have described, which owed much of its neatness and prettiness to her own subsequent care.

A character so excellent and so independent was no mark for scandal. Yet none escape discussion. Betty Poulter enlarged upon it a little, when the subject was on the tapis.

“Now, dear, everybody knew Miss Dudley had good connections; they were rather a high family in old times. To be sure, she could not approve of airs; certainly, it was not republican; but, after all, this was a free country, and if Miss Dudley did keep herself a little aloof from almost everybody, why, there was no law against it, that she ever heard of; she would not be understood exactly to approve of people setting themselves up; but, for her part, she must say, whenever she had called at Miss Dudley's, she had always been treated perfectly like a lady;—a piece of sponge-cake or sugar-gingerbread,—about which Miss Dudley is very particular,—always, and sometimes a glass of wine. And as for single women, she *could not* imagine what people meant by eternally slurring about old maids; she did n't doubt, that every one of them might have been married, over and over again; some folks could tell stories, if they were only willing to reveal the inmost and treasured secrets of their hearts! As for Miss Sibyl Dudley, she would not pretend to assert anything really positive; but there *was* a young man,—that she knew,—she had heard the story, a good while ago, from a cousin of hers, Nabby Poulter, who tended at Madam Fribble's, a while; she said she heard Madam Fribble herself call her ‘Miss Dudley,’ as she was trying a pair of gloves,—the gloves were dove-color,—and this young gentleman was with her,—very handsome,—and looked a good deal

like an officer; and this was actually,—this I do know, dear,—while Sibyl Dudley was visiting her aunt Shirley, in Oxtou, before her mother's death."

"O, but the young man, Miss Poulter — what became of the young man? why were n't they married?"

"O, something must have happened to him, I suppose; in fact, I never heard the particulars,—if it did, it was all hushed up;—but one thing I am certain of, ladies, that this very young man was actually seen with Miss Dudley in Madam Fribble's store."

"But, I really don't see what she is going to do now. Her property is only just enough to keep her decently; and with this young niece of hers and her baby on her hands, she'll have a pretty hard time of it to get along," said one.

"Susan Bell was well brought up," suggested another of the consulting party, who was rather romantic, "and she's young and able to do something for a living; she is not in the autumn of life, when everything is faded, but has bright dreams and beautiful days before her," (and O, "most lame and impotent conclusion!") "perhaps she might take a small school; I'd send our Jenny in a minute; yes, and Johnny too, I rather guess."

"Yes; or what do you say to a millinery establishment?" replied another. "I've always felt, somehow, as if we did not get the first of the fashions at Mrs. Fadington's; and, as Susan has been living now some time in Philadelphia, it's likely she has picked up some very good notions in dress. That's a sweet bonnet you have on, Miss Poulter!"

"It is, dear; Nabby Poulter sent it down to me, on Saturday, by the stage; I always depend on her for my best bonnet every season, and I should have worn it out, the very last Sunday, if it had not been for this weary storm."

The kind interest, however, which these ladies took in the well-being of Mrs. May, on the present occasion, was altogether gratuitous. They had not taken into the account, that

Mr. May, whom they had entirely forgotten, to say nothing of the lady herself, might entertain objections to their best-contrived arrangements. Indeed, as none of them were at all familiar with the true relations of persons and things, which they had seen fit to discuss, their views upon the subject were as unenlightened, as they were necessarily disinterested.

Mr. Bell, the father of Mrs. May, had removed to Pennsylvania, several years earlier, in the hope of bettering his fortunes by some speculations in coal-lands, of which an opportunity offered. Of course, he took with him his only and motherless child, then a school-girl of sixteen or seventeen years. The bright and sparkling girl had deeply fascinated young Henry May, who was then residing at Eastford, for the purpose of pursuing his studies in the law, — the town, at that time, being famous for one or more eminent legal practitioners. What little Mr. Bell had observed of the love-passages, between his pretty daughter and young May, he scarcely reflected upon at all; his own affairs demanded his closest attention; and it had probably occurred to him, only as one of those passing fancies of youth, which was hardly likely to stand the test of time and absence. Nor, in fact, had any definite declarations of attachment been made, on the part of young May. He had, perhaps, judged it best to defer these to the season of some clearer future. And, although his heart sunk within him, when he saw the young girl depart, — as if a sensible cloud, dreary, hopeless in gloom, perpetual in sombre shadow, had closed down upon the beautiful town of Eastford, — then really shining under the brightness of one of the loveliest of summer mornings, — he had swallowed his emotions, as he best could; and after one entire day spent in wandering a long distance into the country, had resumed his usual avocations; fixing his eyes steadfastly, at times, during the following day, upon one and the same page of "Hale's Pleas of the Crown," which we believe was the treatise then particularly engaging his attention.

Upon learning, after the lapse of a year or two, — by what means

“ We well might guess, but may not say, — ”

the disastrous result which had awaited Mr. Bell's speculations, young May, shortly before this admitted to the bar, had hastened to Pennsylvania, and to the interior town of Mr. Bell's residence. By both of his old friends, to whom friends, it is likely, were few, he was cordially welcomed. The spirit of Mr. Bell was completely broken; and May had not the heart to leave him. In fact, he determined to remain, and assist, as far as was in his power, to retrieve, perhaps, something, of what seemed to be an utterly-lost game. He was not without some moderate resources of his own, and had neither duties nor strong ties to draw him elsewhere. Mr. Bell gladly accepted his services, and, as our readers might with propriety anticipate, in due time these young people were married. Shortly afterwards took place the not unexpected demise of Mr. Bell.

Young May had continued at Colesville, to wind up the embarrassed affairs of his father-in-law; and having now brought them to a conclusion, and saved something from what proved to be not a total wreck, he had determined to return to Eastford with his family. But as a journey on land, of several hundred miles, was not then performed with its present ease, he had reluctantly concluded to embark them on board the unlucky packet, anticipating for her a brief and pleasant run. His own business on the way made it necessary for him to travel by land. He had been compelled to start a few hours before the vessel could sail, leaving his wife in the charge of some friends, who were to see her safely on board. Other female passengers were engaged to go, so that she expected company and any necessary assistance. These failed at the moment of sailing, which must account for her proceeding alone. Her husband might now be shortly expected at

Eastford, and then, probably, would first hear of the dangers and sufferings, to which his wife had been subjected.

“And how do you find yourself now, my love?” inquired Miss Dudley, after some changes had been effected in the attire of her niece, and she was comfortably installed in the dimity-covered bed, which her aunt had insisted on, as best for her, though she would herself have preferred to occupy the easy-chair by the pleasant window.

“I think nothing is really the matter with me, my dear aunt,” she replied; “I feel weary, and just a little confused. The incidents of the last day or two scarcely appear to me like the events of waking hours. Were it not that I see your kind face, and hold my darling baby in my arms, I should hardly believe myself in a world which had almost passed away from me, — O, how frightfully!”

“You have, indeed, had a terrible experience, darling.”

“Yes; it has seemed to me that, until that moment, I never knew what life was, or what death might be.”

“Do you remember, in one of my letters to you, I once quoted from some author, — ‘*La vie ne se revèle a nous-mêmes, qu’avec le choc des occasions*’? But I ought not to disturb you with these thoughts now.”

“O yes, I remember it well, — that dear letter! It is only recent events that are at all confused with me; — it was after my poor father’s misfortunes, at Colesville; and it does me good to talk; it helps me to collect my senses, and brings me back, nearer and nearer, to breathing life again. O, what a mercy it was that Henry was spared this experience! I do believe he would have gone mad for me and poor little Mary, when the captain called down to the cabin, ‘All’s lost!’ But I was really so stupefied with horror, and so terrified with the frightful noise of the waters rushing in, that I scarcely realized anything perfectly, till after I was brought into the house, on the shore. But when I did think, I tried hard to feel resigned.”

“It is well,” said Miss Dudley, “that we do not know what we may be called upon to suffer. When the trial comes, God gives his children strength equal to their day!”

“The most vivid recollection I have,” said Mrs. May, “is, I think, of the afternoon before the gale. I was, of course, unaware of what was soon to take place. But the sea was almost calm, unnaturally so; it grew black overhead, and the heavens seemed actually to shut down upon us; all looked preternatural and ominous: along the western horizon; the sky was of a perfectly ghastly white, and the sun, as it glared over the waves, looked absolutely pallid, and very small, — O, whiter and smaller than the smallest moon! — as if it were shrinking away in terror, as well it might, from such a fearful coming conflict of winds and waters! The sailors had been stamping about the deck, getting in the sails, — I had taken only one look at the scene, and hurried down to hide my head in my berth, and —”

“Hey, hey! what’s all this?” said Dr. Walton, entering the chamber. “This will never do! I must strictly forbid any recurrence to these scenes for the present.”

Mrs. May gently insisted that the “talk” had done her good; but professed her willingness to submit to the doctor’s directions. Miss Dudley assured the doctor, when she left the room with him for a moment, that she had only indulged her niece in this conversation, to which she was so much inclined, as she had sometimes observed, that, in this way, the overstrained nerves were relieved.

“Yes, when tears supervene; a plentiful flow of this admirable provision of nature may be, and often is, extremely serviceable; for, in that case, it constitutes a crisis of feelings, and tends to relieve those functions, which have been wrought up to a dangerous pitch. Did you observe any moisture in her eyes, my dear madam? She turned her face from me. A *dry* talk rather operates to excite, and there might be fear of the brain, in the weak and feverish state of

a patient, by recalling scenes of extraordinary agitation and suffering. However, our patient is doing extremely well — you gave her the drops, ma'am, — yes. Quiet, no doubt, will soon bring her round. I trust we shall soon see her husband with her, which will prove her best medicine, after all."

Indeed, we are glad to announce, that the doctor's prognosis was happily justified by the event.

Henry May reached home in the course of one week — long enough to him, but O, how tediously drawn out to his anxiously expecting and loving wife! Those were not the days of telegraphs, and the "Eastford Courier," containing a particular and most affecting account of the wreck of the vessel and the rescue of his wife and child, was not likely to fall into his hands on the road. In fact, on the last stage of his journey, from Oxton to Eastford, on a route, where there are now half a dozen trains, and hundreds of passengers, every day, there was nobody in the stage-coach but some sailors, bound to join their ship, and a deaf old lady, who seized a moment, at one of the stopping-places, to let him know how frightened she was, lest she should hear something awful from the tars. The very driver (as Yankees say) was not acquainted with him, so that really he had arrived at the very door of Miss Dudley's house, without having learned a word on the subject.

Over a meeting like this we shall refuse to linger. In the course of the conversation, however, Mr. May inquired if nothing was saved from the wreck, with some interest. "There were papers," he remarked, "in one of the trunks; in fact, Susan, with other things of less consequence, a deed to your father, which might have proved of some value, though probably not much, of lands in the backwoods of Maine, — which I intended to examine into. I had understood, from what little your father said upon the subject, that these were entirely unproductive, and the deed, I observed, was not even recorded."

It seemed, however, that nothing was saved. The vessel had gone to pieces in the night, and, except some drift-stuff, nothing was known to have come ashore.

“It was truly a pity,” Mr. May said, “though it would be most ungrateful in them to complain, who had been the subjects of such a merciful preservation; but this tract of land was one of considerable extent — he believed an entire township; it had been conveyed to Mr. Bell in the course of his transactions at Colesville, and it might have proved worth attending to, some time or other; but, as the deed was lost, there was an end to the matter. If it had only been recorded, why, that, of course, would have saved it; he had not thought it worth while, or, indeed, prudent, to send the deed so far by mail, and no other opportunity offered. He had intended to see to this, upon his return to the east, and had put it in the trunk with other papers of less value. But if it’s gone, Susy, there’s the end of it, and fretting about it will do little good to anybody.”

CHAPTER IX.

“ Pictures like these, dear madam, to design,
Ask no firm hand and no unerring line ;
Some wandering touches, some reflected light,
Some flying stroke, alone can hit them right.”

POPE.

TRANSACTIONS, such as we have recorded, could hardly take place in the little town of Eastford without attracting a good deal of public attention. At the insurance office, of course, the occurrence of a marine disaster was a subject of thrilling interest. The old “sea-dogs” and retired merchants, who frequented that common centre of confluent tidings, where it was said that questions, savoring rather of the person than of the personalty, sometimes occupied their attention, discussed the details of this maritime mischance with professional skill and concern. Luckily, nothing was underwritten at the office on the stranded vessel, so that the interest exhibited was more of a general than special nature. If the cables should be cut and the vessel could be warped off, stern foremost, at the next high tide, it was thought she must be so hogged, indeed, it was likely, so completely strained and broken-backed, that she would be no more fit to make a voyage in, as one said, “than an old basket.” The conduct of Captain Benson — for men will honor courage and generosity — was universally commended ; and, to the credit of the office be it said, several of its habitués contributed, without grudging, to a small sum, which it was proposed to raise for the benefit of Jack Holliday, now hauled up, poor fellow ! with his broken arm.

The news had run about the town with great rapidity; and, in a very short time, the particulars had become so mixed up and wrested, in their passage through various vehicles, that it was now really impossible to distinguish the true from the false. "A large vessel," some alleged, "had been hurled, by one tremendous wave, high and dry up the beach, and the people were all now down at Joslin's farm, and coming up to town, as soon as they could get their clothes dry. Dick Western had gone down with his carriage on purpose to bring them up." This story happened to meet with contradiction in one particular, on the spot, by the inopportune appearance of Dick, in person, on the street, whistling to a large Newfoundland dog, which usually followed him. It was then asserted that the schooner had sunk at her anchors, and every soul on board had perished;—while another statement gained considerable currency, to the effect "that a raft had been constructed out of spare spars belonging to the distressed vessel (which, it was alleged, was an Indiaman), and that Mr. Atherton had swum his horse through the breakers, and, by almost superhuman efforts, had been able to drag the half-drowned wretches to land—that Mr. Atherton was now lying at farmer Joslin's in high delirium—Dr. Walton had been hastily sent for, and Mrs. Atherton was in a state next door to distraction,"—which last particular element possessed some little grain of the salt of truth to season the remaining monstrous inventions.

In the course of the day Mrs. Atherton had had many callers, anxious to gain authentic information at its most likely source. Many friends came, earnest to sympathize with her, if she were really in distress, and to share in her misfortunes; and some acquaintances, ready enough to observe how she (especially she, a minister's wife) grappled with the vaguely understood calamities and

—— "clouds that lowered upon *her* house."

While she was thus sitting, in the forenoon, gayly laughing, with some of her young friends, at certain of the incidents of her morning's apprehensions, a loud and hasty knock at the door was speedily followed by the appearance of Miss Betty Poulter, in a state of great and evident excitement; she instantly sank, almost breathless, into a chair.

"O, dear!" she broke out, "you must excuse me, Mrs. Atherton, — mercy on us! I don't know whether to laugh or to cry, — I'm so agitated, ladies!"

"What *is* the matter? what *is* the matter?" exclaimed the whole company at once. Mrs. Atherton, with whom Betty was no favorite, summoning all the dignity she could command, under such a wild and sudden incursion, was able to say,

"I pray you to tell us what *has* happened, Miss Poulter."

"O, such an accident! And to think it should happen to me, after all, to find it out! He has ears, — I assure you, he has ears, as true as you're alive; I'm ready to take my oath of it before any justice, this very blessed minute."

"Ears, — ears! what on earth *are* you talking of, Miss Poulter? Won't you have my salts? Fanny, they're on the table by you, dear. Pray, hand the bottle to Miss Poulter."

"Why, poor old Mr. Thumpingwell, the Methodist preacher, — I stumbled against him, coming quick round the corner; for I was anxious to pay my respects to you, Mrs. Atherton, at this time. I'm sure — and I'm extremely glad — the story can't be true about Mr. Atherton. How people do talk! — and he chose to tumble over; I can't see, for my life, how it happened; for he's rather a stocky man, you know, and I'm nothing but a shadow, as it were; and when he went over, the wind blew his long locks away, and I saw his ears plain with my own eyes; and his hair is n't a wig neither; it's all a sheer fabrication. I took hold of his ear myself, when I helped him up, for I was resolved not to let such a chance go by."

“ Well, ladies,” said Mrs. Atherton, — laughing heartily, as did all the rest, who were fast getting into what, in New England, is sometimes called a “ gale,” — “ well, ladies, I am sure I am entirely in the dark about this affair.”

“ Why, did you never hear it rumored that Mr. Thumpingwell’s ears were cropped, for some reason or other, — I believe because he was a Methodist, — before he came over to this country ? and that was the reason why he wore his monstrous head of hair so long, and curled so stiff down his cheeks ? I always *did* insist there was n’t one word of truth in such a shameful story.”

“ I assure you, I never heard any such rumor ; I have always understood him to be a very good person.”

“ Well, there’s no truth in it ; I’m perfectly satisfied now.”

“ What ! that he’s not a good man ? ”

“ O, no ! that his ears are on his head ; and good large ones they are, too.”

“ Let me offer you a glass of water, or a little wine, Miss Poulter.”

“ O, thank you, Mrs. Atherton ! ” said she, taking the wine. “ I feel a little better ; this has been truly a day of disaster ; I only hope the old gentleman didn’t know who I was. I scampered in here fast enough, I assure you.”

Notwithstanding Mrs. Atherton’s ignorance on the subject, the gossips of the town, in fact, had often canvassed the point now so satisfactorily elucidated by Miss Betty. For the worthy Mr. Thumpingwell, whether in consequence of any unusual size imparted by nature to his ears, as alluded to by Miss Poulter, or for any other reason, or whether designedly or otherwise, had hitherto certainly concealed those necessary appendages from the too curious gaze of an inquisitive world. But if his ears were, in fact, of extraordinary dimensions, nature had certainly been equally liberal to the exterior of his cranium, in one other particular ; that is, in

respect of his hair; which was profuse in quantity, and jet-black in color; and in which he took some perhaps excusable delight. For, say what you will, though I cheerfully allow, that the vanity which seeks to substitute personal advantages for, or even to compare them with, more substantial qualities, is ridiculous and unworthy, yet I could never understand why personal graces were given, except to bear their proper, though inferior, value; and I am firmly convinced that those who possess any such are unanimous in this opinion. However that may be, it is certain that Mr. Thumpingwell wore this mass of hair after a fashion then not usual, in thick curls, hanging down the sides of his face, and over his very shoulders.

Hinc illæ iræ. That is, hence the unsated curiosity to which this practice had subjected him, the gossip and scandal of which it had proved the occasion, and his sad final overthrow, at the hands of Miss Betty Poulter; for black Nance always insisted upon it that she did it on purpose.

“Lud-o'-man! that Missy Betty, she's always poking her long nose round all creation. Hope she'll die easy, now she find out old English Methody got some ears!”

Even Jack Holliday, to whom this irreverent remark was made, ungallantly asseverated,

“O, Nance! She's a regular old maid. She's in everybody's mess and nobody's watch.”

Upon this point I do not pretend to pronounce. It is certain that Mr. Thumpingwell was a very worthy teacher of his sect, of rather a spare habit of body; not “stocky,” as Miss Poulter asserted; and that he did a vast deal of good amongst a class of people, who would not, probably, have derived an equal amount of spiritual instruction from a different sort of guide. He had officiated to a flock at Eastford for a considerable time. Some malicious person had set afloat the ridiculous story about his ears; and some old-womanish people were idle enough to believe, that they had

been actually cropped, before he left his native land, in consequence of his resolute dissent from the doctrine and discipline of the established church of that enlightened and highly civilized country. For their traditionary lore had not, probably, enlightened them as to any changes from those intolerant days, when a certain diminutive archbishop was in the habit of promoting such punishments (among the lightest) towards his Christian fellow-creatures; and which had extorted from their Puritan ancestors that emphatic ejaculation, "Great laud to the Lord, little Laud to the devil!"

But, it seemed, that Miss Poulter, upon the occasion of her signal discovery, was rapidly moving down the street, which led into that on which Mr. Atherton's house was situated. Her sunshade, unluckily, was held very near her face, and she was intensely ruminating upon the objects she had in view. As she turned the corner with very considerable forward impulse, she came directly upon the divine, who was quietly advancing in an opposite direction. In conformity with the law of mechanical forces, one or the other of the opposing powers must necessarily give way. *She* called herself "a shadow;" and she was not stout, in proportion to her height; but she was tall, gaunt, bony and strong, and under the influence of perfectly straight forward and rapid propulsion. The poor preacher, on the other hand, was really nothing to her, in point of physical power, and projectile efficiency; to say nothing of a far inferior degree of velocity on his part. The result, therefore, was not doubtful for a moment. The preacher rolled into the gutter, and the secret of his life, if secret it were, was no longer more safe than a similar one of the Phrygian king, after it had got into the possession of that whispering jade of a Syrix; — we say Syrix; but, at any rate, it was one of that inveterate family of "hearkeners," the *arundines*, for we are not really sure whether her transformation or the disgrace of Midas fell out first.

CHAPTER X.

“We mistake man’s diseases, when we think there needeth nothing to cure them of their errors, but the evidence of truth. Alas, there are many distempers of mind to be removed, before they receive that evidence.” — RICHARD BAXTER.

“Egli dirizza il becco allo sparviero.” — ITALIAN PROVERB.

THE afternoon of this day of days passed off quietly enough ; but, as if fate had marked it in the calendar with a piece of chalk of some very peculiar color, it seemed as if its wonders would never cease.

When Mr. Atherton came home to tea, — for he had called with Dr. Walton at Miss Dudley’s, — he found rather an odd acquaintance at his house, whom he had not seen for a number of years, and who had announced that he now visited him on business. This was Mr. Prior Date, a person whom Mr. Atherton had slightly known, as a sort of hanger-on at the college, while he resided within the walls of that seminary, as an under-graduate. This gentleman was graduated himself so long before, that nobody — at least, nobody of a recent generation — remembered the period. He had embraced no profession, nor had he any ostensible occupation ; but spent the greater part of his time in fumbling over the college library ; and many years of his life had been passed in dipping here and there into books, which no one else ever looked at, and apparently to no earthly purpose. His mode of life was unsocial, and he seemed really friendless ; and it was some slight civility, casually rendered him, which had awak-

ened perhaps a spark of feeling in the rather fogyish-looking gentleman, who was now seated in Mr. Atherton's parlor.

This person was of a very inquisitive disposition, and talked a great deal about being *practical*; though why, it would be difficult to conjecture, for nobody could be more utterly and hopelessly theoretical, and what schemes he had were of a nature altogether impracticable. He took occasion, however, to urge his notions so strenuously, and in such a contentious spirit, that most people avoided his society. Some, who, it is to be hoped, did him injustice, considered him little better than a free-thinker. Besides all this, he was noted for an extraordinary indecision of character, and was one of those persons, who seem unable to arrive at fixed opinions upon any subject whatever. This unhappy constitution of mind it was, which probably prevented his falling into any of the ordinary and regular pursuits of life. After Mr. Atherton left college, he had vaguely heard, that this personage had wandered off to the "far west," and had taught school a while; and some said, had engaged in other employments not so useful, and may be not so creditable.

Mr. Date's head was as gray as his pantaloons, which scarcely extended to ankles, wrapped in integuments of blue yarn, and his upper garment consisted of a rather rusty black coat. The collar of his shirt fell over his cravat. His vagrant hair started off from his head in many directions, and stood up stiffly along his forehead; and this, combined with the effect of large round spectacles, with iron bows, which he wore, gave a peculiarly owlish aspect to his rather circular face; which character was much enhanced by a hooked and slightly-twisted nose. Mr. Atherton invited him to tea, which was already prepared, and after enjoying this refreshment, Mr. Date proceeded to unfold his errand.

It seemed, that he was now anxious to obtain some convenient boarding-place in Eastford, to which he had been attracted by its reputed cheapness and quietude; for he was,

for the present, engaged upon the preparation of a spelling-book upon a new system, in which English words were to be presented strictly in accordance with their sounds; or rather, what Mr. Date supposed to be their sounds, for, as he was unable to distinguish one tune from another, it is not likely his senses were very acute as to tones. There was now a manifest and deplorable incongruity, he asserted, between the results arrived at by the organs of sight and hearing. His plan, he contended, would revolutionize the English language, and eventually supersede a literature, conveyed in a vehicle so barbarous in its extent and form. He intended to cut off all superfluous syllables, and exclude every unnecessary letter. The word "type," for instance, should be spelt "typ," and "voyage," "voj"; or, perhaps, to avoid the diphthong, it would be best to come at once to the spelling warranted by the maritime usage of pronunciation, and write it "vyj." Acting upon his theory, he wrote his own name PRYR DAT, which accounts for his receiving no answer to a note, addressed by him to Mr. Atherton, on his present business, and which that gentleman had taken to be some idle hoax.

What he now desired was, advice in respect to a boarding-house. He had examined several, but had been unable to arrive at any definite conclusion.

"At Mr. Keep's," as he proceeded to state, "for instance, the vacant room was up three pairs of stairs, but there were curtains to the windows; while at Mrs. Lodger's, only two flights were to be ascended, but shutters alone would be found at the windows, upon entering the room; he had learned, on inquiry at Mrs. Lodger's, that they had brown bread for breakfast; while, at Keep's, they offered white exclusively, though toasted, if preferred, for that morning meal. The most elevated apartment was in fact the largest, though the least accessible. The windows of one establishment commanded a view of a green square; in the other you looked upon a rather agreeable garden. At Mrs. Lodger's, a boy was maintained to

perform the general household drudgery; while at Kcep's house, you must either black your shoes yourself, or trust to the offices of a female underling, who could not certainly clean a man's shoes satisfactorily."

Of course, Mr. Date was an old bachelor.

Between the rival houses, he had found himself entirely unable to strike the balance of pretensions, and had now come to seek the arbitrament of Mr. Atherton. He stated his perplexities with great gravity and no little unction.

"Non nostrum — tantas componere lites,"

said Mr. Atherton, endeavoring to preserve his own gravity, while his wife had found it scarcely possible for her to remain soberly in the room. She had moved about the apartment in various directions, pretending to busy herself about something, but had at length been compelled to hasten into the kitchen, to indulge in an inextinguishable burst of merriment.

"In a case so evenly balanced," resumed Mr. Atherton, "I should be governed very much, I think, by any slight difference in the price."

"Unfortunately, they charge exactly alike," said Mr. Date.

"'A plague on both their houses,' then, I say, thus to embarrass a simple seeker after bachelor accommodations. The curtains, I think, would settle the question with my wife, were it not for going up that third flight. To me it seems a case, in which we might properly enough invoke the most fabulous dispenser of human fortunes. Suppose I toss up a copper for you? Will you abide the issue?"

"I could n't engage to bind myself; the matter has cost me a good deal of uneasiness, one way and another. But I am surprised to find you a believer in Fortune, Mr. Atherton."

"I a believer, my dear sir! I am utterly faithless. I abjure her worship, and deny her heathenish divinity. A

goddess, to be worthy of idolatry, should be benevolent, considerate and just ; *she* is only fleeting, capricious and cruel."

" I suppose you are as sound in orthodoxy, as when you fought its battles so stoutly at college ? "

" I trust my faith has suffered no decadency, sir."

" Have you met with this new work on the Cosmogony, which shakes to pieces the common idea of creation ? "

" I have seen the work ; still, I may say, my faith is moderately firm. Those, who are so very much enlightened by anonymous conjectures, had, perhaps, no great faith to be shaken."

" Well, I confess myself a firm believer in the Pre-Adamite theory. I see no reason why this world should not have been inhabited for countless ages. I don't understand its beginning the other day, as it were."

" You might as well urge that its habitableness began yesterday. This would equally solve your doubts. By carrying the commencement back, you remove no difficulties. A beginning ten thousand centuries ago was a beginning still ; and is no more intelligible than one of six thousand years."

" An origin so remote, however, at least carries the question beyond the reach of what we know, instead of offering us an account, which many philosophers, as you are aware, pronounce unsatisfactory."

" Not Christian philosophers, surely. The doctrines of these speculatists seem to me those very 'oppositions of science, falsely so called,' against which the great apostle of the Gentiles uttered his warning. And you would accept a theory, whose only quality is, that it makes the question more obscure, in place of the only account we have, which, while it appeals to our faith, is certainly not inconsistent with our reason ! "

" Then you hold to the Bible account of creation ? "

" There is certainly an argument, let me humbly suggest, against the theory of the existence of a race before Adam,

or, to state the proposition in more general terms, its existence, for a period prior to that accounted for by Scripture, to which I should beg to await your reply."

"What is it, pray?"

"That there is no authentic history of the world amongst men, or of which, if lost, we have any account, tradition or intimation, anterior to that contained in the Bible. Do you suppose, if men existed on the earth, for all the hundreds or thousands of centuries, imagined by certain so-called philosophers, that, during these immense periods, they were perfectly stupid and senseless, incapable of improvement, without any use of ordinary human faculties, having no learning, or literature or annals; and leaving behind them, not merely no records of their existence, but not a vestige or trace of the arts of life;—neither the ruins of their architecture, nor a solitary sign of their habitation, throughout what must have been a peopled earth;—and no allusion to them or theirs, and, we may thence infer, no knowledge of them, in the most ancient writings which we possess, or of which we have heard? Such a speculation as this not only contradicts our own experience and all known history, but is too preposterous, on the face of it, for the belief of the most credulous child."

"Why, Mr. Atherton, the people of what is known as antiquity were more or less barbarous, and, for aught I see, might have continued so, for a longer or shorter period."

"I beg your pardon, sir. Many, certainly, of the nations of antiquity, of whom we have any authentic information, were people advanced in arts, eminent in literature, known for learning. The Egyptians, notwithstanding their recent condition, are an instance in point. That Moses was 'learned in all the learning of the Egyptians,' pre-supposes them to be a people of high cultivation, at a much earlier date; and to them at a later period, Plato, as we know, is said to have been indebted for the elements of his philosophy. Yes, the very Arabs, the mass of whom have probably been nomadic,

from the days of Ishmael, have given us even our numerals, and algebra, — no study of a savage race, surely, — and some literature. During the dark ages, a kindred race were the most cultivated people of their times ; and, at a very early period, if the book of Job presents a true picture, these Arabs had amongst them men full of knowledge, philosophy, logic, eloquence. To the very ancient Persians we owe the elements of astronomy. And the few hints we get in Scripture, as to the state of affairs amongst the Medes and Persians, whom we are too apt to consider as barbarians, and which are confirmed by profane history, not only present them in a very favorable light, but give us a high idea of their probity, as well as their intelligence and cultivation. Why, sir, the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, recorded in the book of Ezra, not only exhibit a wise and stable administration of public affairs, but are conceived in the most noble and magnanimous spirit, and — I trust it is not irreverent to say so — show an absolute skill in the detailed management of mere business matters, which could not be surpassed by the state papers of any modern nation. I need not speak to you of the classic people. But all these and others, earlier or later, have made their impression upon the world, and have left behind them some tangible evidence of their intelligent being.

“ Now, sir,” he continued, “ my argument is, that the histories of these people are within known limits, and subsequent to, and correspondent with the Bible history. But where are the works and records of your anterior races, if any such there were ?

“ If the present race of mankind were descended from a stock preceding the time of creation, according to the Scripture relation, we should have, I hold, some glimpses of them, however faint. If they were an earlier and independent race, that is another matter ; but it does not militate with our origin in Adam, according to the received account.”

“ Why, Mr. Atherton, do you really believe in the account

of the creation, literally? that days, for instance, are to be understood as our days, and years to mean what that term does with us?"

"Well, sir," he replied, "as, upon this subject, I know nothing else, I can say nothing different.

"But upon the general topic of our discourse," he continued, "permit me to say, that as *philosophers* are more inclined to believe pagan than Christian history,—and it has this badge of truth, that, being independent, its confirmatory statements, of course, challenge faith,—it certainly does confirm the scriptural relation, as far as it goes; that is, for a certain period anterior to the times of the Saviour. For what precedes, then, and going back far beyond the times of any other record, we have the books themselves, carrying their own evidence clearly with them, as to their antiquity and faithfulness. Then, at the time of the Saviour, there is their undoubtedly reputed authority and antiquity. Then, to say nothing of the confirmations of profane history, and the monuments of Egypt, for instance, for a very long period before Christ,—the last of the prophets comes down, to about four centuries antecedent to that era. This is no great interval, within which to transmit records or traditions. Think of books we have in the English language since 1400, or 1450,—yes, and manuscripts of many centuries earlier."

"Traditions! do you mean to say, you have any reliance on traditions? Why, they fade out in a generation or two."

"Not among a people like the Jews, who held to them and preserved them. Besides, the communication between different ages may be closer than many imagine; for instance, I have often heard my father say, that he knew a man in the army, who had often conversed with another, who was well acquainted with Peregrine White, the first child born of Christian parents in New England. This might carry back any direct communication, considerably more than two hundred years, and, supposing White's parents, or their friends, had

told him anything, the tradition might go back to the time of James I., or Elizabeth, or even earlier, with a good degree of accuracy.

“Then, sir,” continued Mr. Atherton, “we have yet existing the cities of the most ancient times recorded in the Scriptures. There is Damascus,—the Damascus of Abram, as well as of Paul, still standing; and Nineveh, ‘that great city,’—the city of Ashur,—destroyed and now exhumed.

“Where are all, or any of these things, throwing the slightest ray upon any earlier period, than that of which the Bible informs us ?

“Having, therefore, a *sure word*, professing to come home to us, under divine sanctions, and sustained by the reliable evidence of all existing facts, our fallible reason may speculate upon vague theories,—but we are liable to make shipwreck of what is most valuable to us, and to grope in darkness forever. No, sir; the Bible offers us that account of these things, which inspiration was willing to afford; all beyond may be bold and ingenious, but can be only unsatisfactory, and, to say the least, very vain conjecture.”

“Well, sir,” said Date, “I can’t pretend to argue this question with a divine; but I hardly supposed people, now-a-days, fully believed in the Old Testament.”

“I do not know what ‘people’ you mean, Mr. Date; Christians do; and let me assure you, that no intelligent person can reject the *Old*, who really believes in the *New Testament*. The authority of the one asserts that of the other, in every book of its sacred pages.”

Mr. Date now rose to take his leave.

Mrs. Atherton had returned to the room, and was present during the discourse which we have detailed.

“You have had rather a high argument, my love,” said she, “with this oddest of all odd sort of people.”

“Yes, he is very much to be pitied for his peculiarities, many of which, to be sure, are highly amusing. Out of

trifles he makes grievances, and he trifles with matters of the highest weight. His mind is a sort of whirlpool, into which much enters, but nothing comes out; or, if anything really escapes, it is twisted and distorted, beyond all natural shape."

"Let me ask you, my husband, if ancient nations do not pretend to give some account of their own descent? I have not a very clear notion on this subject."

"Yes, my love; the people of antiquity, who were at all refined, endeavored to give some explanation of their origin; but it was always so absurd, as to show they knew nothing about it. There had been a period, no doubt, when they were comparatively barbarous, and the traces of their descent were lost. It does not require thousands of years to wipe these away, amongst a people so situated; a few generations may suffice, in such a condition of society, to erase all definite tradition, or to pervert its true character; so that they would know no more about their ancestry than our Indians, for instance, or the savage people of Africa. On the other hand, the Hebrews were always in a condition to preserve their records."

"Well, I'm sure, we have had strange mutations to-day, and have literally gone

'From grave to gay, from lively to severe.'"

"As one of my lively friends in college used to say, 'such is life,'" replied her husband; "and now, it is high time to prepare for bed, after a day of so much to excite and weary us."

In regard to Mr. Prior Date, we are compelled to inform our readers, that he was entirely unable to settle the conflicting claims of the several boarding-houses, and consequently left Eastford on the following day, and, it is to be hoped, found offers of lodgings, less distracting to the mind, in some other equally quiet and cheap town. We fear, however, that the indecisive character of his disposition has had an influence, in still retarding the appearance of the new spelling-book,

which has not yet been announced. To show the unhappy results of indecision and procrastination, however, we would suggest what has been subsequently seen, — that other more enterprising philosophers have revived his ingenious theory, and, in a very unphilosophical spirit, have shamelessly deprived Mr. Date of all the credit of his original discovery.

CHAPTER XI.

“Nature, more infallible than politicians, teaches us to prevent the evil which threatens us ; it becomes incurable while prudence is deliberating what remedy to apply.”

DE RETZ. “*Conspiracy of Fiesco against Genoa.*”

“Nor love thy life, nor hate ; but what thou liv’st
Live well, how long or short, permit to Heaven !”

MILTON.

BUT now misfortunes were impending over the pleasant town. They say, that these never come single. We suppose this only means, that the relations of things in this world are really so close, — though often unnoticed by the casual observer, or even sometimes imperceptible by the most careful scrutiny, — that if one link of the embracing chain weaken and break, the other parts, which are in “a concatenation accordingly,” necessarily fall to the ground. In the present instance, therefore, we conceive that, from the occurrence of one calamity, a direful brood of ills may have naturally sprung.

The latter portion of the summer had been excessively warm ; but this is too soft a word, — it had been hot, — hot almost without parallel. Not that soft and attempered heat, fanned by the pinions of the sweet south-west, bearing on its fragrant wings the balmy odors of fields and flowers, which, in our harsh and variable climate, so often makes the breath of June a luxury and a delight ; nor yet that of a still later season of the year, when, as the shadowy evening hours ascend the expectant heavens, the lord of day refolds the gorgeous curtains of his air-built pavilion, and robes the place of his rest

with those hues of light and loveliness, which art of man but faintly imitates, and mines of earth afford ineffectual pigments to portray : and then, as with the sudden and rapid rush of airy squadrons, the ocean breezes wheel into the exhausted city, and dash with irresistible vigor along its scorching avenues, and offer to the panting multitude a succor and a joy !

No ; it was like that parching and thirsty breath, which drinks up the springs of being, along the arid sands of Arabia, or the fire which waves, as with an ever-flaming torch, over the trackless and lifeless Lybian wastes.

Indeed, the heat had been sultry, continuous, suffocating, intense. The heavens were of brass, and the earth iron. A browner horror darkened amidst the dusty and sapless foliage. The walls glared with a fierce and merciless light. The pavements reflected a beam unendurable to human vision. Day by day the withered earth seemed smitten by the same piercing, lurid and remorseless sun. And when night rebuked his burning eye, with her veil of lustrous and ineffable azure, even this hung motionless, breathless, unsprinkled with pitying dews, unstirred by relenting hope, over the face of wearied and beseeching nature.

O, for " a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand ! " O, for the big and bounteous drops of refreshing moisture ! O, for the leaping, dancing, plashing, abounding and rejoicing rain !

Of course, such a season and such a condition of the atmosphere were not favorable to health. Although, at that period, regular watering-places were not, yet such, as were able to desert their ordinary avocations, languidly resorted to the sea-shore, for an afternoon, at least, to gather such refreshment as they might, from its cooler breezes and amidst its sparkling breakers.

In the mean time, an unlucky vessel had arrived at Eastford from a foreign port, and although kept for a certain

period at quarantine, had been permitted to come up to the wharf, before the proper purifications had been completed. The decease of the regular port-physician, who took the malignant disorder brought by the unfortunate vessel, undoubtedly afforded opportunity for some neglected precaution in this particular. The consequence was, the fever began to appear in that part of the town where the vessel lay. And, although confined mostly within a certain quarter, as well by a rigorous *cordon sanitaire*, and other necessary means of prevention, now that the mischief had partly taken root, — as, perhaps, by a predisposition to this sort of fever along the banks of a river, rather than in more elevated and airy situations, — not a few of the worthy citizens of Eastford sickened of a disorder, which seems yet to have lost none of its virulence or its terrors.

Many of these unfortunates were parishioners of Mr. Atherton, and, of course, their unhappy condition claimed of him a duty, to which so true a soldier of the cross would not be found wanting, in the battles of his master.

In this maritime quarter of the town, though inhabited mostly by people in moderate circumstances, dwelt some of the most thriving, as well as most esteemed, of his congregation. Some prosperous merchant, it may be, had here built his handsome mansion, that he might sit at the open window, of a summer morning, or, after the early tea of old-fashioned times, and watch for the well-known signal of his home-returning bark, or speculate upon her cargo and condition, as, with swelling sails, she swept upwards, on the bosom of the gentle river, towards her accustomed berth. Or, haply, some retired sea-captain might prefer,

“ From such a loop-hole of retreat,”

to indulge his taste for maritime matters in general, and, spy-glass in hand, to keep a bright look-out for the incomings and outgoings of all the familiar craft which frequented the port.

With these were others, seamen, artisans and persons of various pursuits, whose occupations made a residence near the water convenient or desirable. Not a few of the inhabitants of the infected district had removed, temporarily, to dwelling-places more salubriously situated. To most, this was impossible. The rich may fly before the face of the destroyer, and seem to escape all but "the inevitable hour;" to the poor, there is no such choice. They must brave the danger and abide the issue, and find their only refuge in the eternal Providence, which watches over and provides for the meanest subjects of its paternal care.

It was a melancholy mission, which required the services of Mr. Atherton, in this feverish and now almost desolated region. It was the abode of silence and sorrow. The distant hum of busy movement, the rattle of wheels in the remoter streets, the clink of hammer or sledge upon the anvil, heard through the drowsy stillness of the summer air, penetrated here, with a faint reverberation, that yet seemed, almost harshly, to remind these solitudes of a world from which they were completely shut out. The houses were darkened, and wore a deserted aspect. The stores and shops were chiefly closed. The dismantled vessels looked ghastly, as they elung to the cheerless wharves. The flap of the tide, as its waves struck and recoiled from their lazy sides, resounded through the hollow docks with an echo, which was almost startling. The very footfalls of the few who had occasion to flit along these unfrequented walks, had something eerie and weird-like in their intonation. The shadow of death folded over the place the sombre plumage of his drooping wing!

The sufferings within those afflicted dwellings it would be vain and intrusive to portray. Who can depict the unspeakable anguish of the human heart? In its own depths let its bitterness rest; and, perhaps, from its root may spring a branch, bearing precious and immortal foliage. It was the voice heard in Ramah. It was the universal language of

human bereavement. It was the cry of the prophet, "My father, my father!" It was the lamentation of the king, "My son, my son!"

A sore trial it proved to be, to the youthful wife of Mr. Atherton, to feel that this was a war from which her husband could not be exempt. Life could be dearer to none than to their loving and happy household. Little Georgy Atherton was now a golden-haired urchin of about two years; and his mother had felt for some time gathered about her heart another of those ties to earth, which make "life *more* sweet, and death *more* bitter."

"I scarcely know how to let you go, my love," said she, upon the reception of a message summoning her husband to some sick-bed. "I grow almost superstitious about it; and though, as you know, I endeavor to control such feelings, I sometimes hesitate about your duty, in exposing yourself to these constant dangers."

"I have no doubt, darling," replied he, "that any hesitations you may feel are of a very lady-like and delicate character; indeed, of that description of gentle 'noes,' which always lead to an eventual 'yes.' For neither of us can have any real doubt about the duty; and when that is settled, I am sure you would not have me flinch."

"Indeed, I am sure you will do nothing unmanly, or unworthy a Christian minister; but you come home so weary! And then, how do you keep up your spirits so? Do you never think of the danger?"

"Not often. Of what avail would it be? To give way to fear, or to whatever prostrates the physical or moral energies, is to open the gates to the enemy, and rather to urge, than merely invite him to enter. I have no doubt, reasonably good nerves, with the consciousness of performing my duty, have given me immunity so far, and I trust, by the blessing of God, will still preserve me."

“I fervently pray so, my darling husband ; but O, your nerves must be sadly tried !”

“Yes, love, and my heart, too, often enough, as you well know. Your pretty little favorite, Lucilla Downing, caused me the most affliction, I believe ; and though now so happily recovering, yet it must long be said of her,

—— ‘ *questa fu rosa.*’

But now I must hasten down to poor Hutchinson, who, I fear, is ill prepared for the event that most probably awaits him.”

And not without such preparation for his perilous mission as was then considered serviceable, and such leave-taking as love suggests, and many charges to be careful and return soon, and attendance to the door, and looking after him down the street, Mr. Atherton departed on his errand of mercy.

The person, whom he most frequently encountered on these occasions, was his father-in-law, Dr. Walton, whose skilful and often successful treatment of the insidious disease, had added much to his many claims upon the affection and respect of the community. Unlike some of his profession who, in the absence of more sterling qualities, deem it politic to assume every exterior advantage, likely to beguile the easily-deluded world, Dr. Walton was, perhaps, only too negligent of the forms and the expectations of society. If truth must be told, his outer man appeared sometimes a little slipshod. Captious and inconsiderate persons, who were not aware of the real merit and true ability, which all this carelessness partially veiled, might have been tempted to employ still stronger expressions. His ample growth of unshorn gray hair often flew, as somebody said, “every-which-way” to the breeze. All the attention of Mrs. Walton was in vain, to keep his garments always in precise order ; but constant use, and the frequent miry condition of the ways, afforded some plausible excuse

for the generally spattered aspect of his professional sulky. In point of personal ablution, however, no person could be more scrupulously exact.

To make up for these deficiencies, he had a true genius for his valuable profession. His mind was rapid and decisive. His keen eye detected, in an instant, the lurking elements of the specific disorder. He seemed to grasp and analyze them, by a sort of instinct. And although this habit of quick and close observation might sometimes lead him to jump to erroneous conclusions, yet, as his rapid views were formed by a ready judgment, instead of imperfect observation, his skill and accuracy were generally vindicated by the result.

"I perceive, John," said he, at one of these interviews, as the doctor was mounting his sulky to depart, "I perceive that your duties often begin, where mine have come to an end."

"Ah, my dear sir!" replied the minister, "the call for my poor services ought to commence, long before there is any pressing need of yours."

"Modest as ever, I see; and faithful as modesty is apt to show itself."

"Is there no hope for this poor man, sir?"

"None, in this world. His habits of life have been such, as completely to break him down; and the sooner you are with him, the better it will prove for him, I trust, for the future. *Ibit ad plures.*"

And with this professional sentence upon his patient, and smiling, as doctors will, his mind reverted to his next case, as he rode off to another scene of suffering, and, perhaps, of death.

As the season rolled on, however, a favorable change had taken place in the condition of the atmosphere. Copious rains had fallen; and were succeeded by bright and beautiful and bracing days. The stagnant air revived. The brassy heavens were once more blue. The cheerful breeze again

came loaded with blessings. The face of nature smiled once more with an exultant joy. Signs of renewed life began to animate this half-deserted quarter of the town. The remoter sounds, which so lately reëchoed through these hollow streets, were now drowned or melted into the present din ; and even the reverberating blows of the cooper, upon the cask he was constructing at his shop, came softly across the still river, and would scarcely be noticed except by an attentive ear. Amidst the busy hum of renewed industry, the few lingering cases of disease were almost forgotten, but by the immediate families and friends of the sufferers. To these, however, Mr. Atherton was unabated in his attention. But long-continued fatigue and exhaustion and anxiety were now beginning to wear seriously upon his excellent health and sound constitution.

In fact, upon his return home, at dusk, from one of his pastoral visits, he was compelled to admit to himself a consciousness of far more than usual indisposition. He had been somewhat exposed to a shower upon his way, and was sitting by the ample fireplace of the kitchen, drying his garments by the blaze, which the cooler air of the opening Fall now rendered sometimes comfortable of an evening. This was the day of wood-fires, and the cheerful flame crackled and ascended up the voluminous chimney. So large were the dimensions of the fireplace, according to ancient custom, that it admitted a four-legged article of household furniture, called by our ancestors "a form ;" that is, a long bench or seat, extending from the opening line of the fireplace to the very back wall of the chimney itself, thus admitting whoever was disposed, as the Scotch say, to "sit into the fire."

Mrs. Atherton was herself superintending the preparation, by the maid-servant, of a comfortable cup of tea for her weary husband ; and, for the sake of the grateful warmth, the table was already set in the neat and shining kitchen itself, — a practice which our genteel ancestors did not, upon occasion, disdain. Mr. Atherton had made no complaint in regard to

himself; but the quick sense of affection had observed, that the usually animated clergyman was more than usually languid and drooping. In the chimney-corner, upon the form, sat another personage, who had been equally scrutinizing, and whose observation, indeed, few things ever escaped. She had rolled into the kitchen, a moment before, with a swagger of more than ordinary amplitude, and, with a short pipe in her mouth, had now installed herself by the fire.

This person was Black Nance, whom we have before introduced to our readers, and who was said to have been brought from the West Indies in her youth by some shipmaster of Eastford. If so, she had long been left to her own devices, and lived quite alone in a small house, with a garden, near the centre of the town. Whether it resulted from pride, or whatever cause, she kept up no habits of social intercourse with the "Guinea" people of color, — for so their place of residence, on the outskirts of the town, was called, in compliment to the country of their origin. She would not own them for "her folks." She called them, contemptuously, "niggers;" and, upon any allusion, implying connection or equality with them, she had a mode of distorting her mouth and contracting her brow, much more expressive of her inward emotions, than at all pleasing to witness. Her great strength and undoubted experience, together with a certain reputation even for skill in the treatment of ordinary ailments, had long established Nance, as a nurse of fame, amongst those who were favorites with her.

We are aware that many persons seem to believe a practitioner skilful, in proportion to his ignorance. But in the case of Nance, if her claims to confidence, in this respect, were not great to the extent of her pretensions, they stood upon a foundation of reasonable solidity. During the recent epidemic, she had exhibited the most fearless conduct, as well as an apparent immunity from danger of infection, and even from fatigue. With all this, she was chary of words, and

perhaps fairly lost some of her honest dues of praise, by merely doing what was to be done, rather than staying to make much parade about it. Or, at least, the parade in which she chose to indulge was after her own fashion, and consisted of various contortions of her visage and sundry foldings and unfoldings of her hands, occasionally diversified by setting her stalwart arms a-kimbo. To some, the vague terrors of her presence were too much, to admit of her services being welcome in a sick-room; and, on the other hand, it must have been a very strong case, which could induce her to go where her prejudices, which were strong, and not always discriminating, operated against it.

Of the minister's kitchen Nance was a frequent inmate. From this familiarity she derived substantial benefits, and Mr. Atherton, when he occasionally met her, would often be amused with her original and free comments upon persons and things. Not, certainly, that he would encourage evil-speaking; but besides the unadorned aspect, in which matters and things presented themselves to her unsophisticated observation, and her naïve manner of expressing her opinions thereon, — perhaps, like a general in the field, who must, by some means, learn the actual condition of the enemy, and sends out, therefore, those who are rewarded if successful, and hung only if caught, — he felt himself justified in gathering points of information, thus casually and privately, upon topics of interest to his charge, which their modesty, we will say, or some other motive, often induced them cautiously to conceal from him.

Amongst her other peculiarities, like a petrel foreboding the storm, Nance seemed to have a sort of instinctive apprehension of threatened sickness to those whom she fancied; and upon the present occasion, had glided noiselessly into the apartment, and assumed her familiar position in the chimney-corner.

Mrs. Atherton had left the room for a moment, after saying

a word or two to Nancy, and no sooner was the door shut than she gently said,

“Massa Atterton have yaller fever.”

“Nonsense, Nancy! what do you mean? You will frighten Mrs. Atherton, if you talk so,” said he.

The maid-servant dropped into a chair aghast.

“Better little fright now, than good deal more by’nby. Massa Atterton, let Polly get big tub, and massa have his feet in hot water. Nancy know Yaller Jack berry well, when she look him in the eyes. Seen him berry often in Basseterre, long time ago.”

“I see no objection to the hot water, Nancy, whatever may be my trouble, which I hope will soon be relieved. Polly, you can do as Nancy tells you. But what makes you think me so seriously unwell?”

“Massa got pain in back of his head? Yes. Got pain in small of his back? Yes. Bad look about his eyes? Yes. Talk not so easy? Yes. Dis Yaller Jack grip him all over, sartain.”

Accordingly, the largest wash-tub was put in requisition, and by means of a copious infusion from the steaming boiler, the temperature of the water was raised to the highest endurable pitch; the contents of the mustard-pot were poured into the vaporous libation, and the minister’s legs, almost up to his knees, were undergoing a process of parboiling by the time Mrs. Atherton returned.

In the mean time, however, Nancy had proceeded to the garden, with which she was sufficiently familiar, and which contained its beds of sage, and savory, and mint, and rue, as well as the vegetable productions, needed by the family, and had reëntered, with her apron full of Roman wormwood, which she was now engaged in pounding in the kitchen-mortar, and occasionally expressing the juice through a cloth.

“Mercy! Nancy, what *are* you doing?” exclaimed Mrs. Atherton; “and, O, John, how wretchedly you look!” — for

Mr. Atherton was now leaning his head languidly upon his hand, and was certainly showing the effects of the disorder, under which he was suffering. "O, do let me send for father!"

To this proposition her husband made no objection, though Nance privately rolled up the whites of her eyes, and accordingly Polly was despatched, at a round pace, to effect Dr. Walton's instant attendance.

"Nancy thinks I should have my bed warmed, love; and I should indeed be glad to lay my head on the pillow."

Mrs. Atherton, who was amply efficient in all these domestic and necessary offices, soon provided the warming-pan with its suitable contents, and proceeded to the chamber, with a charge to her husband to follow in five minutes. In the midst of her anxiety and the performance of her own part, she had paid little attention to Nancy's operations, who had soon contrived to fill a tumbler at least half full of the clear juice of the bitter herb. By means of entreaty and expostulation, she soon induced the minister to swallow nearly the whole of the unpalatable draught, which trying operation, in the reduced condition of his physical and moral powers, he had scarcely the energy, or perhaps the care, to resist. With the assistance of Nancy, who would have thought little of carrying him in her arms, he was immediately led to his chamber, and, aided by his wife, was soon safely ensconced beneath an ample supply of bed-clothes. A profuse perspiration very shortly rewarded the hopes of his nurses, and by the time Dr. Walton arrived, he was enjoying a sound sleep.

His father-in-law declined to have him awakened; but after finally inducing Mrs. Atherton to retire, both he and Nancy remained by the bed-side of the patient for the night. When morning at length came, — as come it will, even to a sick-chamber, — Mr. Atherton awoke, feeble certainly, but refreshed; and Dr. Walton pronounced febrile symptoms to be scarcely perceptible. Rejoicing the heart of his daughter,

therefore, with his favorable judgment, as to her husband's speedy recovery, he ordered such slight prescription as he thought necessary, and departed to his own home.

Dr. Walton often, afterwards, commended Nancy's energetic and judicious proceedings.

"No doubt," he observed, "much had been owing to Mr. Atherton's excellent constitution, and to such gentle remedies, as he had found it necessary to employ. Still, there was nothing like taking these things in season; and too much could hardly be said in favor of a *hôt* foot-bath, — as hot as could be borne, — as promoting that perspiration, which tended to throw off feverish symptoms. Once get the disorder upon the surface, my dear sir, and then, you know, we have an open enemy to deal with."

In regard to the decoction of wormwood, Nancy saw fit to say as little as possible. She had seized the very earliest opportunity, in the evening, to remove all traces of its preparation, as fearing, perhaps, it might be considered a bold and unauthorized interference with the privileges of the healing art. Nor are we, on our part, able to pronounce, whether the dose was really of any absolute service, in breaking up the fever; or, indeed, if it was actually the yellow fever, with which Mr. Atherton was threatened, as Nancy so confidently asserted. On this point Dr. Walton looked solemn, but gave no opinion. Certain it is, if that be any evidence, that the bed-clothes themselves were found to be very yellow. "The sheets," as Mrs. Atherton and the washerwoman afterwards asserted, "were as yellow, — yes, no saffron ever was so yellow!"

Mr. Atherton sometimes alluded, afterwards, to the potent and difficult dose he had been induced to swallow, in his weak condition.

"Bitters berry cleansing, Massa Atherton," was all Nancy's reply.

Indeed, if fame spoke truth, unlike some regular prac-

titioners, she did not hesitate sometimes to swallow her own medicine; though qualified, in her case, by something, which corrected the taste, and made it, perhaps, easier to take.

Of one thing we are certain, that there is no reason to believe Dr. Walton was ever informed of the administration of the wormwood.

CHAPTER XII.

“Hinx-minx, the old witch winks.”

NURSERY BALLAD.

“These authors, therefore, are to be read, that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation ; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators and historians.”

JOHNSON. “*Life of Milton.*”

So passed the time away, at dear old Eastford. It was not generally moved by such stirring incidents, as some of those which we have thought worth recording ; and, it must be confessed, that the course of life with its inhabitants was of a rather humdrum character. The town, in fact, had grown a little drowsy. An unnatural quiet began to reign, in its once stirring and busy streets. As the iron men of another day passed off the stage, the spirit of society became, perhaps, somewhat degenerate. There had been those, who had fought with Wolfe at Quebec, and others, at a later period, who, with Arnold, in the hour of his then untarnished fame, had ascended the Kennebec, upon the hazardous and difficult expedition which he led ; and many more, whose energies had been awakened and their minds enlarged, by intercourse with the world without, through the trials and toils and glories of the Revolution. Men of this stamp had communicated to those around them something of the fire and stoutness of their own natures, and entered themselves, with a bolder and loftier spirit, into the various pursuits of business and the avocations of life, in which they were subsequently engaged.

These, and such as these, as has been observed, had faded,

or were fast fading out ; and the times had become degenerate. Let us not be understood, however, fully to agree with Lord Verulam on this subject ; especially should we be reluctant to give undue preëminence to the qualities developed in war. We glory in peace ! *Et nomen pacis dulce, et ipsa res salutaris.* And it would no doubt be the disposition, as it is the duty, of all Christian people, to “ follow after those things which make for peace.” But is it possible for us yet “ to live peaceably with all men ” ? Perfect peace, it would certainly seem, can only exist amongst perfect men. In the present constitution of society, there will yet be “ the cankers of a calm world and a long peace.” And though war, Heaven knows, has evils and horrors enough, yet it may sometimes be doubted, whether vices and meannesses, more degrading, more chilling to the heart, more killing to the soul, do not sometimes grow up and prevail, when the nations slumber in profound repose. This, to be sure, is because their own natures are vile, and they do not make the right use of peace, which is naturally the daughter of love, and should be full of her mother’s kindness, gentleness, and generous feeling. On the contrary, we fear that men’s minds grow really belittled, where they ought to be enlarged ; and “ honor sinks,” where all the pursuits of men become a mere encounter of wits, after petty gains.

Be this as it may, Eastford certainly fell off from much, which had formerly given its character a name and a renown ; and many of its young men left it, with lingering steps, lovely as it stood, in the charms with which nature had encompassed it, to seek the more active field of the capital, or still more distant scenes of employment, for their fretting faculties. But although events undoubtedly occurred in the quiet little town, which, if properly presented for the consideration of our readers, would assume a cast more or less romantic in their texture and development, yet our business is especially with those, who have been thus far exhibited upon

the stage of action, and it is to their further fortunes, that we feel ourselves compelled to ask the reader's attention.

But, in justice to the plan, which we have thought proper to mark out, we shall be under the necessity of omitting, upon the present occasion, certain relations going over a series of years, and including details of a highly interesting, though private nature, in regard to persons, many of whom, it must be admitted, are deserving of the respect and good will of all well-disposed people. In this particular, the novelist possesses a power which, if arbitrary and supreme, may yet, if judiciously dispensed, be made agreeable to the subjects of his dominion. The dramatist must absolutely preserve his unities, by presenting a combined series of well-connected and naturally-succeeding incidents. The historian can properly and justly leave no *hiatus* in that sequence of events, great and small, which it is his business to relate in the consecutive order of their occurrence.

But the novelist is confined within no such narrow limits. As, in the family circle, all parties are not uniformly present, and some may be absent upon long journeys or distant voyages, and, after weary intervals, may all appear again, changed it may be, and travel-sore, around the domestic hearth; so the painter of private life may, at his pleasure, drop, as it were, some or all of his characters, at a suitable epoch, and take them up again, after the lapse of an appropriate space of time; in a word, he may occasionally consult his own convenience, and leave much to the imagination of his readers.

As, for instance, in the case of Miss Poulter, of whom, by the by, Jack Holliday, generally a devout admirer of the sex, was ungallant enough to say,

“That woman's as busy as the devil in a gale o' wind! Why, she knows everything. A young fellow can't look at a pretty girl, but what she'll tell you a long story about all the particulars — she's as good as a newspaper.”

That lady, however, had found it convenient to quit the field of action for a time ; and, like a wise woman, sought, by means of temporary absence, to mitigate the force of a public ridicule she could not hope to subdue. For the adventure of Miss Betty with the unlucky preacher had resounded through the town, with all the hundred versions of rumor. Some went so far as to allege — and they were those who adopted Black Nance's theory — that she had been observed looking anxiously at the minister, on several occasions ; peering at him curiously in public, and even procuring an occasional seat near the pulpit, in the conventicle where he officiated ; and that she had now shamefully clasped that divine in her arms, in the street ; and that, in his efforts to escape her awful embrace, he had unfortunately tumbled to the ground. At all events, she had thought best to flee to the city, on the pretence of visiting Nabby Poulter, her cousin, and of personally superintending the construction and trimming of her next new bonnet. During her lamented absence, though scandal is never entirely dormant in a small town, whatever may be the case in the city, it was remarked, that the people of Eastford enjoyed a season of somewhat less flagrant gossip than common.

Her return was the topic of a slight conversation, between two of our friends.

“ Well, Nancy, I hope you 're well ; what 's the news of the morning ? ”

“ Pretty well, tank you, sir. Hope you 're berry well, dis fine morning, Massa Atterton, and all de good folks in dis here house, sir. Bad penny soon returned, Massa Atterton ! ”

“ You can't mean yourself, surely, Nancy ? ” (And she shook her woolly head.) “ You set too just a value on your own merits ; but what ill coin have you been passing off, that has come back upon your hands ? ”

“ I ! dear me, Massa Atterton, — ha, ha ! poor Nancy get too little money 'nuff to pass, anyhow ; don't take no bad

money; poor folks keep bright look-out; hard ting to cheat Nancy, I tell *you!* Dis none of my money, sir,— Miss Betty — she 's come again."

" Ah, indeed! quite an active, stirring person, Nancy."

" Busy as old hen wi' chickens! — see her in twenty places, dis berry blessed morning ever was."

" O, not quite so many, I think, Nancy! — you 're too much inclined to exaggerate."

" Well, she 's flying all over dis town, anyhow — *did* hope some silly old body pick her up in de city. Wants somebody to take care of her, — see she don't run over ministers, sir. Then how her tongue do go! Try to catch me dis morning, but Nance too sly for her."

" Why, how did you escape, Nancy? "

" I, sir? I only don't do nothing. I stop short, sir, — stand jes so " — (setting her arms akimbo and throwing back her head) — " look at her so " — (putting on a succession of inimitable grimaces) — " berry polite — make her low curtchey, so, — she soon make off, I tell you, sartain, — hear her keep muttering all down the street."

" Why, Nancy, you must be careful; you 'll be up, one of these days, before the justice, for frightening honest people out of their wits."

" I, sir! Nancy never fright honest people, sir, never! Miss Betty say I crazier than ever, — she got no great wits herself to brag about; too long tongue for that; could n't make out case 'gainst poor old Nancy, 'fore no justice, no-how."

" Well, really, Nancy, you give your own tongue rather too free license; don't you know, you should n't speak ill of your neighbors? "

" Like to know who my neighbors be, Massa Atterton. Some folks lie; some folks talk scandal; some folks run gad-ding all round town; don't want no such neighbors."

“But you know, Nancy, even truth is not to be spoken, at all times.”

“Truth, he bear his weight, though; ever know Nancy lie? no, guess not.”

“Well, you should be careful of your own conduct and conversation, and endeavor to give no offence, and avoid all persons, whose example or society might lead you into mischief and sin.”

“Now, Massa Atterton, bless your heart and soul, did n’t I *tell* you how I got away from Miss Betty, dis berry morning, sir?”

Since it is as easy, therefore, to jump over an interval of years, as of weeks or months, we propose to clear, by one fell leap, the considerable chasm of sixteen or seventeen years. We may feel ourselves impelled, at some future period, to fill up this long interspace of time, for the purpose of offering several interesting and valuable suggestions which we have on hand. Our present objects forbid this now.

In the mean time, Master George Atherton had grown to be a very fine lad, almost at man’s estate, and was more than two years the senior of his sister Alice; while Miss Mary May, whose early career had so narrowly escaped a sudden conclusion, had arrived at a time of life, half way between the two. “Not out of my teens yet,” she insisted, “by more than one good year. No, Ally, my love; I propose to come to a dead stand, just where I am. I shall use the imperative privilege of my sex, and command time itself to stand still, to suit my sovereign will and pleasure. I intend to hold all my subjects obedient, even if it take me the enormous length of imposing commands on that very wise and judicious youth, Master George Atherton. I beg your pardon, George; I believe you call yourselves *men* in college.”

“Yes, Mary, such is the decorous observance instituted amongst the future dignitaries of the land.”

“Upon my word, they do themselves much honor! Neither law nor custom, I believe, yet confers upon them the title of manhood; and their own exertions are yet to secure for them the future dignities, which they seem to have grasped so summarily.”

“Mighty fine, indeed! This is an extraordinary dissertation for a girl ‘in her teens.’ Don’t you know, Mary dear, that education and the influence it confers put them on the high road to honor and fortune?”

“I admit nothing, sir, while I am in the height of this great argument; especially with a gentleman figuratively arrayed in cap and gown. I believe a man’s position must be the result of his own efforts, and that all the learning in the world will not help him, unless he knows how to use it, and, knowing, dares employ.”

“That sounds well; and your argument is as profound as a lady’s always is. Yet, though there may be exceptions, I suppose the possession of learning generally implies the capacity to use it; so that, after all, the case you put is much like what the logicians call reasoning in a circle.”

“Logicians! I hate logic!”

“Hate logic! that’s good, for a young lady who’s trying to make out a proposition! But is n’t it rather a strong expression of dislike towards the main implement of reason?”

“O, George!” said Alice, “she’s only trying to pester you. I declare I found her, the other day, just before you came home, poring over a syllogism, in a regular brown study.”

“Traitor! And I suppose you’ll next pretend my ire was excited, because it puzzled me for the moment? I was only endeavoring to discover the utility of a set method of doing that, which people generally do as a matter of course.”

“Logic helps one to see how few people reason correctly, Mary. It is astonishing how bewildered they often get about the commonest things.”

“ If your statement is well founded, it goes to show that reasonings — mind, I don't say reason — are not so valuable to us as the instincts and feelings, which commonly lead us to correct results.”

“ Stated like a philosopher, and logically too ; your study of the syllogisms, after all, must have been of service to you. You remind me of the Frenchman, who discovered, to his surprise, that he had been speaking *prose* all his life without knowing it.”

“ What is to be the subject of your exercise at commencement, George ? ” said Alice.

“ I propose to illuminate the world with an essay, ‘ On the cultivation of the imaginative faculties. ’ What do you think of it ? ”

“ O, that 's a sweet subject ! I suppose you 'll have a good deal to say about poetry, and sentiment, and feeling. How I shall long to hear you ! ”

“ I shall expect great aid from both of you young ladies, especially from that most logical personage, Miss Mary May, to enable me to repress any too exuberant and erratic outpouring of ideas.”

“ But what shall you say about it, Georgy, darling ? ”

“ O, I intend to give quite a loose to my imagination. I shall assert, that my own large experience of life, and profound knowledge of the world, aided by the counsels and advice of two equally well-informed and judicious female friends, have tended to enlighten my mind with a great many novel ideas, upon matters and things in general.”

“ Ah, now you 're jesting ! but pray be a good boy, and tell us really how you intend to treat your subject.”

“ Do you desire to be informed what is the sum of that accumulated mass of learning, imbibed by your humble servant, during his four years' residence at the seat of letters ? ”

“ Excellent ! go on, sir.”

“ This, then, it is ; that, as all mankind are mainly con-

cerned with the moralities of life, and few have any real use for the exact sciences, moral training is of more consequence than mathematical ; and, since our imaginations do sensibly act upon and influence our morals, it is of the utmost importance that the first should be sedulously cultivated and instructed."

"Spoken like a great reformer!" said Mary; "and how do you propose to bring about this grand result?"

"By encouraging young persons — you perceive I mean to include ladies as well as gentlemen — in the study of works which will ennoble their natures, instead of those merely which tend to sharpen their faculties."

"What do you hold to be really such, George?"

"Philosophers, who teach the science of mind; poets, who analyze the springs of action, and whose fame is vindicated by the common assent of mankind, in its better moments, to the elevated sentiments and noble examples, which they offer to view; and historians, whose statements, if not always to be relied upon, yet afford us the opportunity of comparison and reflection upon human life; and, if we are wise, encourage us to good and restrain us from evil. For this reason, I should prefer to see the chair of mathematics vacant; the oracles from which, I fear, seldom illumine the darkness of our subsequent steps — to that of moral philosophy, whose teachings all men, who are to lead society, ought to know; and Professors of Polite Letters, under my system, should become as useful, as they often are ornamental members of society and the college."

"I commend your doctrine very much, George," said Mary; "but do you conceive the kind of cultivation you propose will help one on in the world?"

"Perhaps not, as the world is constituted; but you forget I am fiery for a great reform."

"Do you expect to rise by it?"

"I do not expect to rise at all. This world was made for Cæsar, not for me."

“ Is it manly to feel thus ? ”

“ Manly ! I assure you, I think people rise now-a-days rather by feminine than manly qualities.”

“ I thought men boasted of greatness as belonging peculiarly to your sex.”

“ Once, maybe, it was so ; but heroism is gone out of fashion ; now, they advance on all fours, looking down instead of up ; and rise by creeping, instead of flying.”

“ The representatives of our sex, in your presence, sir, if I may speak for both, feel flattered by the qualities you are pleased to attribute to us.”

“ On account of the creeping ? O, that ’s only an illustration, deduced from your natural weakness ; the charge was levelled against my own sex.”

“ Of course, you except Mr. Atherton ? ”

“ Perhaps so ; people of heroic tendencies, you know, often lie *perdus*, and lost to the world, for want of opportunity, or in consequence of the degeneracy of their times. But here we are at Aunt Sibyl’s gate, and there ’s the dear old lady, nodding to us from the window.”

But we will defer our account of this visit to another chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ And many deemed her heart was won ;
For, sought by numbers, given to none,
Had young Francesca’s hand remained
Still by the church’s bonds unchained.”

BYRON. “ *Siege of Corinth.*”

“ Sweet harmonist ! and beautiful as sweet,
And young as beautiful, and soft as young,
And gay as soft, and innocent as gay,
And happy (if aught happy here) as good.”

YOUNG. “ *Night Thoughts.*”

It will be perceived, therefore, that the conversation thus detailed, took place in the course of the little more than a mile’s walk between the house of Mr. Atherton and that of Miss Dudley, who still resided at “The Cottage,” as she and her friends loved to call her pretty, and really romantic, little place of residence; though the term was scarcely known at that time, as applied to dwellings in New England. Under her fostering care it had grown to be a lovely spot; and, fairly embowered in roses, and protected by shadowy foliage, it might seem the appropriate retreat, as it was, of some unworldly and placid devotee, who conceived that at least one way of reaching a better condition of being, was gratefully to accept, and piously to enjoy, such blessings as Heaven, in its goodness and abundant mercy, saw fit to bestow. Still active and benevolent, though retiring as ever, the good lady found her chief pleasure in the society of her familiar friends; for of formal acquaintance she had few or none; and such would have found little solace or satisfaction in her society. She

had not been without her severe trials, especially in her early days. She had never experienced, in all their agony of bitterness, those

“Sufferings the poor alone can know,
The proud alone can feel ;”

but, besides the great misfortune of her early orphanage, she had had to endure, and still endured, that one life-long calamity of her youth, whose memory hung, like a mourning veil, over its secret shrine in her heart ; for she had discovered, alas ! too late for her peace, but yet in season to save herself from a worse doom than the mere loss of earthly happiness, that the man whom, in the guilelessness of unpractised youth, she had loved, as the best of her sex only know how to love, concealed something more than mere unthinking heartlessness, or even ordinary villany, beneath a smooth, and only too prepossessing exterior ; and, from that moment, she beheld him no more.

Against the earnest remonstrances of her friends, with whom she might, no doubt, have soon passed into the condition of some of the most excellent, most useful, yes, and most amiable maiden ladies, whom any of us have been fortunate enough to know, — in which it might have been said of her, as of them, perhaps, to a very late period of life, “O, Aunt This will do that,” and “O, Aunt That will do this,” — she had felt it necessary for her to gather up the shattered elements of her broken heart, as she would the bruised petals of a rudely-trampled but precious flower, and, in the solitude and silence of a life, repair, if possible, for heaven, what was henceforth worthless for the first great purpose of woman’s existence upon earth. In this effort she had gained peace of mind, at least ; and her life had long glided on that gentlest and smoothest of all currents, which bears amiable and venerable maiden ladies to their final haven of rest.

To her friends, — and especially she dearly loved to be surrounded by those yet in their youth, — her hospitable door

stood ever upon the latch ; and they soon learned that they could hardly offend her more, than by attempting to herald their approach by the formalities of a knock — for bell, of course, there was none.

Long before the occurrence of that event in their lives, which had bound the two households together with the strong chords of a common anxiety and sympathy, similarity of taste and feeling had united Mr. Atherton's family with Miss Dudley in bonds of the strictest intimacy ; and this, too, notwithstanding, as we have before intimated, the lady was a constant attendant upon public worship at St. Andrew's church. Indeed, this made no sort of difference ; for, upon one occasion, when the Presbyterian clergyman was incapacitated by a casual illness, the Rev. Dr. Mountain, who, by good fortune, happened to have a brother ecclesiastic ready to perform divine service for his own flock, was requested, in a friendly manner, and actually did officiate on Sunday in the Presbyterian meeting-house. This liberal proceeding on both sides gave occasion of scandal to some ; and, while one party thought it a great concession in the Episcopal clergyman, there were those who held it to have been a piece of unwarrantable license, on the part of the Presbyterian session.

Between the houses of Mr. Atherton and Miss Dudley, therefore, there were few days passed without the interchange of some friendly intimacy or kindness ; and, as the young people grew up, this happy condition was likely to suffer no diminution. Indeed, the older they grew, the closer, if possible, the intimacy seemed to become ; and when George Atherton was home for the vacation, especially after a sunset of a fine summer evening, you might hear his cheerful voice, as he called his sister from the garden, or her chamber, "Come, Ally, get your bonnet, dear, and let's have a stroll ;" which generally meant a walk to Aunt Sibyl's, and always a call for Mary May ; unless, indeed, Mary happened to be at Mr.

Atherton's; which chance, it is vain to deny, was one of pretty frequent occurrence. It were really hard to say which of the two young ladies was the most afflicted, and, truth to tell, cried the most, when Master George, wearing, at the final moment, an aspect by no means denoting a too ardent eagerness in the pursuit of knowledge, was ready to take his departure for the college, which his father had chosen for his initiation into the ingenuous arts. The promise of letters, however, with college news, and, may be, a little city gossip, on the one hand, and Eastford events, on the other, served to brighten up the trio a little. Of Mary, George took leave the evening before, in a manner, though affectionate, yet, as Alice, who was present, must have thought, far less striking in its external demonstrations than the fond parting with her and his mother, on the following morning. In fact, this latter ceremony was rather tearfully conducted, until Mr. Atherton appeared, ready to accompany his son; which relief was well; for that gentleman, though always kind and considerate, was one

— “unused to the melting mood,”

whenever the time seemed to have arrived for action.

The college selected was that over which the Rev. Dr. Churchman at that time presided. This gentleman was an ardent lover of learning, and, actually, a scholar from taste and inclination; a man of wit and elegant accomplishments, and famous, amongst other things, for that charming sketch of one of our greatest orators, who has often been styled — with more justice than often pertains to personal comparisons — the Burke of America. The reverend doctor was besides a shrewd reader of character, a pattern of honorable feeling, and an example of active benevolence; with a heart capacious enough to contain the whole human race; warmly beloved by his pupils, and remembered by them all with kind-

ness and veneration ; in fact, full of knowledge, letters, virtue and piety. But he lost ground with many, for want of skill, deficient or unexercised, in financial concerns, demanded, it was said, by the practical exigences of the times ; which, really, should have been left to other officials, as better befitting them, than the head of a university intended for the liberal education of young gentlemen. At this institution Mr. Atherton chose to have his son entered, although widely and radically differing from the religious opinions then prevalent, and often deploring its defection from the true interpretation of the motto engraved upon its ancient seal, "CHRISTO ET ECCLESIE." But, as he well remarked, "if George could not be safely trusted, in this particular, he should have little confidence in the steadiness of his future course of life."

It is not strange that Master George should have been quite a favorite with Miss Dudley ; as, indeed, he was with every one who saw him during the delightful days of a well-guided and well-disposed boyhood ; for he was a thoughtful but still spirited little fellow, and of a form and bearing which could hardly fail to attract the attention of others, who look around them with the least "considerate eyes." His father would have discountenanced any shyness, on his part, to such companions as he deemed suitable to the lad's age ; but this was unnecessary ; for, although he did not enter into the feats of youth with the active eagerness of some, yet, when it so happened, it was evident enough that nature never intended him to be merely a follower, wherever courage and generous action lead the way.

"There, — there's George Atherton, now, riding up the street," observed Miss Dudley, looking out of the window, one afternoon, to Mrs. May and Mary, who were sitting with her — which latter, at the time, had little more than entered upon "her teens." "What a fine, manly boy he is ! I declare, he bows like a prince !"

"Yes, he's a noble boy ! I don't blame his father for

being proud of him, though some people do think it unbecoming a minister — I wonder what horse that is, he is riding.”

Miss May suggested, that she “believed it was Western’s Black Warrior;” for that worthy had long before arrived at the dignity of a stable, upon his own account. “O mother,” she continued, “you must let me ride with George, some time, now this weather is so fine.”

“Well, my dear, whenever Mr. Atherton is willing to trust Alice.”

“I really wish,” said Aunt Sibyl, “that George would have his hair cut; such a mass must be uncomfortable.”

“O, aunt,” said Mary, “how cruel you are, to wish to cut off those beautiful brown locks! I would n’t have them clipped, for anything in the world. I’m sure all the girls are envying them to him.”

“Well, but, my dear, it is better for the hair, to keep it rather short. Did you ever remark George’s nose, Susan? It’s the true Atherton nose, — not exactly straight, — but a little rising at the bridge, which I think gives more spirit to the face than a mere straight line, which is rather tame than otherwise.”

But, whatever may be your opinion of a fine boy, — a little thoughtless, perhaps, yet “candid, generous and just,” — still, by no means, in our opinion, exactly

—— “the father of the man,” —

as was prettily said, by that famous poet, Mr. Wordsworth, — unless, in accordance with another observation of the same great writer, he be permitted, during his nonage,

—— “to wander, at his own sweet will,” —

certainly, there is no sight in nature so pleasing, as a fair young girl; indeed, no object comparable to her, both for what she is, and what she is not. She is so innocent, — so simple, — so shy, — so bashful, — so truly lovely! The feelings of

her nature are only just dawning, and her instincts, though existent, are yet incomplete! And the very immaturity of her mind and heart and person endows her with a charm, which no after-developments can surpass. And surely a sweeter creature than young Alice Atherton never gladdened the eyes of the weary seekers, in this world, after an ethereal beauty, seldom vouchsafed to mortal vision. To say, that she was like her brother in the cast of her features, only more delicate, would be doing very slight justice to the charms of that lovely young lady. Indeed, she had a grace and natural elegance, rarely exhibited, even by the gentler sex; and George's brown locks were somewhat lighter in shade, and really only moonbeams, compared with the thick-hanging and sunny ringlets, which relieved a face and neck, almost dazzling in the purity of their virgin complexion. It was always difficult to tell the exact color of her eyes. But, deep within their inmost depths, there was a shifting and peculiar blue gleam, — like the glimpse one sometimes gets, of a summer's day, when the lightest of all vapory shadows is sailing over the sky, of a brighter, clearer, purer, bluer heaven, far beyond the moving circle of this lower, azure arch; intense, transcendent, — a ray of the soul within, claiming kindred with the soul without.

There can be no doubt, however, that that very charming young person, Miss Mary May, would attract the first, and, perhaps, the next look of admiration, from a true adorer of the fair sex. In height, she was somewhat taller than Alice, and of a browner, yet clear complexion; and her hair, often braided over a forehead, low, yet perfect in the outline of its sweeping arch, fairly glittered with a hue, which only was not black.

“ Her eye's dark charm 't were vain to tell ! ”

We should be tempted to call them Italian, were it not that those are sometimes too sleepy, to admit the appropriation of

so general a description to those of our beautiful friend ; for hers were far from slumberous ; but within their large and broadly-opening round, there beamed a real and substantial, but softened fire ; dark, full, deep, lustrous ; — eyes, in fact, to which Nature had clearly imparted all of which eyes can be made capable ; they smiled or glowed, from out their fringed and darkly-shaded caskets, like orbs of beauty swimming forever in liquid and ambient light.

“ Well, young folks,” said Miss Dudley, as they passed through the open door, into her cheerful apartment ; “ you have come just in season to taste a dish of my very best strawberries.”

“ Do you expect, aunt,” said Mary, laughing, “ to tempt such grave persons as we, with sublunary comforts ? You are not aware how we have been illumined by the light of philosophy, on our way up.”

“ Ah, Mary !” said George, looking rather tender, “ you know, very well, that other lights, though, perhaps, not less divine, have power to draw me away from the most nectared sweets of philosophical speculation.”

“ And for such a gallant and really pretty speech, Master George, you ought not to fail of your reward ; which shall be in the shape of this very largest strawberry, profusely sugared by the instrumentality of my own fair fingers ; so hold your mouth, sir, that I may drop it in.”

“ O, Aunt Sibyl,” cried Alice, “ do you know what we’ve been talking about ? George’s piece at Commencement is to be on Imagination, — and, O, it will be so delightful ! full of poetry, I suppose, and all about Byron and Moore. We shall all go, of course, and Mary depends on it, though she pretends not, — and, O, if you could only contrive to go with us !”

“ Upon my word, Ally,” said George, “ you seem to have contrived already the tenor of the brilliant speech expected of me. With such judicious prompting, how can I fail to make a most distinguished appearance ?”

“How tiresome that is! but is n't it so?”

“I don't know that I have countenanced any such statements.”

“But,” said Miss Dudley, — who, it must be confessed, was no great admirer of those two eminent poets, but rather inclined to peruse the classics of an earlier period of English literature, — “but, Ally, my love, you know I seldom leave home; and though it would be so agreeable to hear it delivered in public, I shall, of course, have to content myself with the reading of it at home. But I think George will hardly follow the plan you have marked out for him, — shall you, George? I should prefer something not so flashy, as many modern writers indulge in — something, for instance, in the style of the ‘Spectator,’ now.”

“You put a modest estimate on my abilities, Aunt Sibyl.”

“O, I mean, of course, in regard to the general tenor of the thought and the style, — that is all. I confess, I am no great friend to what is sometimes called ‘fine writing.’”

“Nor I,” replied Atherton, “when it is merely fine; when it is elaborate without strength, and glittering only, with no inner power; when the long succession of tawdry words leads on the poor, thin, cold, barren thought, — then, I grant you, it is like a beggar decking his tatters and his dirt with flowers.”

“But do you generally approve of ornamented diction?”

“My judgment is, of course, mature; but I may reply, that I do not approve of that which is finical. The grace and beauty of composition vindicate themselves. If the subject and the style are appropriate, I think that a true taste accepts what a true taste has conceived and expressed. A novel, for instance, admits of a more ornate diction, than an essay on the tariff. The art of employing language skilfully is one of the highest and rarest of human powers, and its ornamental exercise, judiciously managed, often imparts a wonderful charm to composition. Dull fellows, of course, may object to a rhetoric

beyond their faculty. Yet what soul does not glow with the impassioned and elaborate eloquence of Burke, and yield itself captive to the softer, but no less cunningly-wrought sentences of Washington Irving ? ”

“ You certainly have been practising for the oration, George,” said Mary, “ and it is evident that you intend to carry, at least, our sex by storm.”

“ Such devotion,” he replied, “ is entitled to its guerdon ; and, since I have given you this taste of my quality, suppose you reward me a little, in advance, with a song.”

“ What shall it be ? ”

“ O, yes ! ” they all cried, “ do, Mary, sing something to us, — it ’s so quiet and beautiful now ! ”

“ Let us have that little gypsy thing, with the wild melody, you were practising to-day, Mary,” said George.

Ere this, the party had adjourned to the piazza, facing the western sky. The golden hues of the summer twilight yet lingered along the summits of the distant hills. Not far above, suspended in a heaven of pure and deepening blue, “ apparent queen,” the crescent moon, and one sole star, like the attendant spirit of her sweet domain, slowly descended towards the faintly-glowing horizon.

Fluttered by no lady-like hesitations, but with a voice at once soft, clear, and of a touching and tender melody, Mary then began

“ THE GYPSY SONG.

Ah, Zingaro’s dark-eyed daughter,

Romanèe, O, Romanèe !

Heeds her heart the tale it taught her ?

Romanèe, O, Romanèe !

“ Morn’s red stream flushed heathery blossom,

Romanèe, O, Romanèe !

Ruddier flame shot through my bosom,

Romanèe, O, Romanèe !

“ Pearl-bright dews lit brake and meadow,

Romanèe, O,” —

“Upon the whole,” said she, “I think I’ll give you something else,” with rather a cunning glance at Master George, and changed the measure, at once, to

“MADELINE.

“O, I know thou art a queen, Madeline !
 On thy brow sits throned the sign
 Of a sovereignty divine,
 And the gleam within thine eye
 Mocks the light from out the sky,
 Where the brightest star is seen, Madeline !

“Then, look down with queenly face, Madeline !
 O, for me no more unrolled,
 Weave those locks of living gold,
 Waste no more each maiden wile,
 Nor the dreamlight of thy smile,
 Or, sweet-heart, give royal grace, Madeline !

“Ah, ’t is vain ! no more I fly, Madeline !
 With the day, thy voice alone
 Woos my soul’s replying tone,
 And thy only thought broods deep
 In the vision of my sleep,
 And for thee I faint, I die, Madeline !”

“That is a sweet and piteous chant,” said Aunt Sibyl, who, apparently, had not attended to the change of the song. “Those gypsies are a very strange people ; but I was not aware they had actually any songs or poetry amongst them.”

“This song was evidently written by some one who had been a-gypsying, though,” observed Atherton.

“Shall I tell where it came from, George ?” inquired Mary.

“No, I think that had better be reserved to a more fitting occasion.”

And thus, with music and discourse, and the union of true and gentle hearts, glided away, as often before, the rapid moments of the soft and solemn eve.

CHAPTER XIV.

“New fashions, follies and vices, make new monitors necessary in every age.” — GOLDSMITH.

————— “Ego verò
Oppono auriculam.”

HORACE.

DURING the considerable space of time which we have barely alluded to, as having elapsed between the early childhood and now the almost opening manhood of George Atherton, we have intimated that the period had passed unmarked by any events of an interesting public nature. This had undoubtedly been the fact, at least, so far as Eastford was concerned, and especially the household and congregation of the Rev. Mr. Atherton. That good man had sedulously and faithfully fulfilled the work of his ministry. Incidents of great private interest had undoubtedly taken place in many families. Some were born, and some died, — words of very common, but, to the party concerned, of wondrous individual import! And *born, living, dying* — this constitutes the actual history of the mass of mankind. Of the great body of the very worthiest human characters, endowed with excellent hearts, and pursuing a vast variety of useful avocations, beloved by a circle of kind friends, it may be, and sincerely deplored, at last, by all connected with them — of all this very large class nothing more really can be said.

Of course, the congregation under the charge of that gentleman were principally, if not altogether, of this description. Many of them, no doubt, during their day and generation,

held a different rank, according to their own estimate; but such was not the deliberate judgment of the world. Neither is there doubt, that many of them were troubled with a quality, — resulting partly, we apprehend, from the very nature of American institutions, — and for which the English language affords no entirely accurate term, and which, for want of a better, we may take the liberty to style vanity, — which is the fault, if it might not even be called the vice, of the people.

The cause of this failing is obvious. Where all are on a political equality, all — at least, the unthinking all — will strive to be in fact, and if this is out of their power, to seem to be, on a par with their neighbors. Now, this is practically impossible by the constitution of nature itself, which, between those who are declared “free and equal,” by the constitution of the country, makes differences, greater or less, the very instant they catch a breath of the air, which permeates this changing world; and which has stamped these differences indelibly, not only in form and feature, but in totally distinct characteristics of mind, and widely-diversified qualities of heart.

Our equality, therefore, is simply political. Inside of this, there will be inevitable, though not fixed gradations; and it is the constant effort to be, or to seem to be, in a rank above us in social life, which is the cause of many trials and troubles. And, even when our fortunes, abilities and pretensions of various kinds, would give us a very fair range of some one of the lower circles, by reaching and stretching up beyond our powers, in order to catch hold of the upper circle of all, and so whirl round in the very vortex of fashion and frivolity — it is thus we often lose the rotatory impulse of our own appropriate sphere, or are, perhaps, thrown off the track altogether, and come limping on again, if at all, under still more unfavorable circumstances.

Yes, it is our vanity, and the unfounded pretensions we

indulge, which do a great deal more mischief than people are aware of. So that, sometimes, the veriest whipster who can put on a brilliant exterior, often got up, it must be confessed, in very ill-taste, thinks himself not only on a political equality, which is true, so far as his vote goes, with the gravest senator, the most eminent statesman, or the most learned judge, but, also, on the same real level — which is far from being the case — with others, very much his superiors in mind and character, and public service, and in all which really entitles one to the peculiar respect of mankind. For surely they are deserving of this respect, who use their powers for the benefit of those, who do not or cannot employ their own in this manner, and without which society would be the loser; whereas, the departure of many of those self-deluding persons who most esteem themselves, and consequently have the least respect for the rights and merits of their neighbors, to any unknown parts, might take place without any public detriment whatever.

In the way thus indicated, a great many silly people learn to over-estimate themselves, instead of esteeming what is really estimable. Of course, it will generally be found that vanity and self-conceit prevail in our hearts, in proportion to our own ignorance and folly; and the best evidence of true merit in any person is, that he knows how to value the same quality in others, and is willing and ready, in proportion to its rarity, to honor what is noble, wherever it may appear, or in whatever individual, quite as often, it may be, amongst the lower as the higher ranks of society.

One method in which this unhappy propensity operates, is to engender envy of whatever seems to be above us, and thus prompt to the pulling down of much which is really great and good; so that the community too often loses the services of the very best, while inferior people are hoisted into positions which they do not adorn, by those whose jealousy

has not been excited, in regard to them, by any superiority of theirs to the common level.

In this and other ways, national vanity is really a national calamity. And, besides what we have thus slightly indicated amongst its ill-consequences, it is too truly the fruitful parent of vice; how truly, let our cities tell! For who does not know, that this inordinate ambition to appear beyond our means leads necessarily to unwarrantable extravagances, and fatal embarrassments, and desperate means to maintain the delusion, and is a manifest bribe to Satan to renew his temptations?

Really, there seems to be little true sense of economy amongst us, properly so called. While, on the other hand, by cultivating a better spirit of contentment, and giving less to show, and struggling far less to keep up appearances, and utterly disregarding the insinuations or more open sneers of Mrs. Grundy, all people in this blessed country might enjoy a healthy and unexampled prosperity, and be far more happy accordingly as they became more contented.

It is just this same spirit, we may believe, which prompts many people to enter upon schemes of impracticable benevolence and universal philanthropy, extremely well exemplified by those great universal philanthropists, Messieurs Robespierre and others, in France; which began by professing love for all mankind, and ended by cutting off the heads of everybody who stood in their way. The motive often is, to minister to a feeling little better than a morbid appetite for mushroom notoriety.

That the religious society, of which Mr. Atherton was pastor, should remain entirely free from this spirit, notwithstanding the sound and excellent character of his public and private counsels, and the living example of his truly Christian life, was not to be expected. Society at Eastford, as well as elsewhere, had undergone certain modifications. Many of the "old standards" — the sterling men and admirable women of another day — had

gone to their reward. The characters of many of the younger people had changed with the shifting times, and others, it is likely, had come in, — strangers, and persons of this or that different cast, “who knew not Joseph.”

In former times, the charities of the church and congregation had been expended in aid of the poor of the parish, or, at most, to help out the funds of the “Bible” or the “Home” and the “Foreign Missionary Societies,” all of which laudable objects had been held to come within the fair range of ordinary Christian duties. But now various other associations had arisen, affording a good deal of employment to idle time, and which it would be uncharitable to allege ever trespassed upon that, which might have been usefully devoted to private and domestic affairs. Some persons, it is true, were so inconsiderate as to allege, that too inordinate devotion to these more distant purposes tended to draw off the attention and divert the supplies needed for objects of charity nearer home; and that the poor, at our very doors, who, it was said, could be relieved any time, were likely to be somewhat in the case of “shoemakers’ children,” whose own toes sometimes peep out, while their father is supplying the necessities of customers, who are “neither kith, kin nor allies” to him. But these people were grumblers.

All these associations, however, were not liable to this objection. For instance, there was one which did an immense deal of good; that is, “The Rag-baby Society,” — for the general supply of that useful article of home consumption, — and the proceeds of the sale of which were to be devoted to the gradual diminution, and those who never smoked, thought, the final extinction of the clay-pipes, habitually used by a portion, at least, of the foreign population, “*in our midst*,” — for so the by-laws of the association somewhat cantingly phrased it, in utter disregard of the exigences and usages of the king’s English. Over this deliberative body Miss Poulter, assisted by several younger and more

blooming adjutors, presided, with much dignity, tempered by great suavity of demeanor; and we have been told that the project, practically, has proved of great service,—in the way of quieting babies.

Of other associations that lady was simply a collaborator, or held some capacity below the highest, in point of official consequence. From one of these a deputation of ladies proceeded, on a certain morning, to make a call of business upon the Rev. John Atherton. It seems that a something—it could not be called a *defection*, for there he stood, just where he had always stood, but, so to call it, a deficiency, measuring him by the standard of the times—had been noticed in regard to the public services of “that great, good, worthy man,”—for so Deacon Makepeace and others, in different language, maybe, did not scruple to characterize him. It had been first thought by some—then just hinted at by a few, again faintly whispered by others, then talked over a little in a deprecativè manner, at a committee-meeting, while the ladies of the committee were enjoying the refreshment of tea—that Mr. Atherton, though a Christian, a gentleman, and a person of admirable powers and really delightful character,—“Such a sermonizer!” Miss Betty said,—after all, hardly seemed to be, as they chose to express it, “up to the times.” Whether that gentleman might not have had the misfortune to fall on *evil days*, of which these persons were themselves in some sort the unconscious exponents, had not, of course, occurred to them.

At all events, the discussion of the matter had eventually been transferred from the committee to the full convocation; and it had been finally and formally resolved, that it was their duty, so to speak, to deal with the minister; though he,—good easy man!—all the while, had not the remotest suspicion of the bomb-shell soon to explode at his feet. Of course, he knew that a great deal of nonsense and folly was rampant at some of these meetings; but, steadily pursuing the

path of his own duty, he had never conceived himself the subject of their deliberations, and no single individual of the association would ever have ventured to hint so much to him.

The deputation of ladies, however, soon made their appearance at his door, "in manner and form," as Polly observed to Black Nance, in the kitchen; and as their inquiry was particularly after *Mr. Atherton*, she had ushered them at once into his study, where, that gentleman, at the very moment, was engaged in writing his sermon for the next Sunday.

They had scarcely been inducted into that studious retreat, when Nance suggested to Polly the propriety of listening at the door.

"What all dese ole women come here for, Polly? Dat Missy Betty and all de rest of 'em?"

"Sure I don't know; come on business, they said, to see *Mr. Atherton*, particular."

"Do'no what business; busy-bodies, sure enough, all dese here sort o' ladies, Polly; some plaguy mischief going on, I tell you, now. You go hear what dey say, Polly," insinuatingly.

"I—I'm sure I shan't do no such thing,—should n't dare,—would be much as my place is worth, and that's good fifty cents a week, if *Mr. Atherton* should find me out in such a mean sort o' business, or *Mrs. Atherton* either!"

"No harm catchin' foxes by de tail, Polly. Missis up stairs in her chamber; guess *Massa Atherton* got his hands full,—le' me go, see, my own self."

"Can't hinder you," said Polly, scrubbing away at the outside of a coffee-pot she was brightening; "but I guess you'll get your black head into a scrape, if you don't look out sharp."

"Never you fear Nance," replied that dark lady, swallowing the personal allusion, in her interest in the occasion; "she always keep good look-out, anyhow."

Accordingly, moving with noiseless steps to the door of the study, she got upon her knees, — so ardent was her devotion to the cause of knowledge, — and placed her ear to the key-hole, with an air of the strictest attention.

But, as the craftiest are often caught in their own guile, so intent was she, in endeavoring to get some notion of what was going on within, that she actually lost all sense of things without, and was, in fact, brought to her feet, in the most unexpected manner, by a light touch upon her shoulder.

“Lud-a-massy, ma’am! thought you up stairs!” she exclaimed, jumping up with wonderful agility for her years.

“Nancy, what is this?” said Mrs. Atherton, with dignity, for it was she who had come into the passage, and was surprised by finding Nancy in such an attitude in her house. “Listening at my husband’s study door? You surprise me, Nancy! I thought better of you; I thought you had too much respect for Mr. Atherton and for me, to act in this manner. I must say, I am perfectly ashamed of you, and vexed I cannot tell how much!”

“O, ma’am, don’t be angry, now!” expostulated Nance, completely humiliated, and not a little flustered; “beg you pardon, ma’am, thousand times, Missy Atterton, ’deed I do, — don’t want to hear Massa Atterton, — Lud-a-massy! What did I say? always do want to hear him, — only don’t listen, — dat is, always do listen, berry ’tentive, ma’am, when he preach; only here’s dat Miss Betty and don’no how many old women — some mischief going on, know dat berry well, — did n’t think nothing, — could n’t help jest hark a minute, — sartain true, poor old Nancy don’t mean no harm, nohow, you know, ma’am.”

“I cannot countenance such conduct for a moment, Nancy. I must inform Mr. Atherton of this, and I am sure he will be highly displeased.”

“O, now, Missy Atterton, Nancy beg berry hard, — missy never do tell Massa Atterton ’bout poor old Nancy; never

could bear have Massa Atterton angry with me. Sure I did n't hear so berry much, only two three little words ; de ladies talk all together, pretty loud, too ; hear 'em cry out ' niggers all poor degraded beasts o' burden,' — like to shake dat Miss Betty ! ”

“ Listeners never hear any good of themselves, Nancy.”

“ Me, ma'am ! now 'xcuse me, Missy Atterton, please. Nancy an't no nigger, nohow ; surely, you berry well acquainted wi' dat fac'. Guinea folks, up dar, nigger, — pah ! — wish it to be most particular understood, I am colored lady ob de fair see ob dis free country ob de United State ob Immeriky.”

As Nancy had, by this time, recovered, in some measure, her lost dignity, we may now revert to the interior of the minister's apartment. As the ladies entered, that gentleman had risen, with the courtesy which always distinguished his demeanor. Indeed, he had more than politeness, for the foundation, so to speak, of his manner, was that considerate sweetness of disposition and goodness of heart, which is the base of all true politeness. Much, which is called so, is in the manner merely ; while of that, which is of the heart, what appears outwardly is only the manifestation. As we once had the pleasure of hearing that celebrated guide and example of fashion, Mrs. Routaway remark (she had casually met Mr. Atherton, somewhere in her travels), “ Now Bob Varnish's manners ” (and Bob was himself of the *crème de la crème*), “ are the perfection of art, while Mr. Atherton's are the perfection of nature.” And though that lady was too much involved in the empty frivolities of fashionable life, she was, by no means, deficient in sense, or in shrewd observation of people and things around her.

His politeness was perfect, therefore, because it came from a heart, which honestly and sincerely wished well to all mankind. And since, in our opinion, the ills and misfortunes, to which humanity is subject, are the result of the waywardness

and wickedness of the species, and not of the determinate counsels of Heaven; so there is no impiety in alleging that, could he have carried into effect the purposes which his benevolence conceived, then

“Not a tear or aching heart
Should in the world be found.”

But, in our judgment, the interview already on foot, in Mr. Atherton's study, is of sufficient importance to be entitled to a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

“ Tu potes unanimes armare in prælia fratres,
Atque odiis versare domos ;
————— tibi nomina mille,
Mille nocendi artes.” VIRGIL.

“ The happiness of the world is the concern of Him, who is the Lord and the proprietor of it ; nor do we know what we are about, when we endeavor to promote the good of mankind in any ways, but those which he has directed.” — BISHOP BUTLER. “ *Analogy.*”

“ LADIES, good-morning to you,” cried Mr. Atherton, cheerfully ; “ this is really an unexpected pleasure ; but I cannot flatter myself the visit is intended for me. Mrs. Atherton, I believe, is in. I suppose our handmaiden must have introduced you into my quarters by mistake, and they are really a good deal too much littered for such a company.”

“ No, reverend sir,” said their leader, with much formality ; “ we have come for the purpose of seeing you.”

“ Indeed ! then I am highly flattered. I pray you be seated, ladies ; the morning is very fine, Miss Poulter ; and ” (addressing Mrs. MacFuzzy, a lady whose liege lord had long been bed-ridden) “ how is your good husband, madam ? I have not called so recently as I ought.”

Having addressed each of the ladies in the circle arranged around the study, and having obtained from each an appropriate reply to his friendly queries, the conversation then came to a dead pause. As often happens, when people set out upon missions of doubtful expediency, the courage, which at first pricked them on, sensibly evaporates in the presence

of the object of their designs ; so now the deputation began to become more and more sensible, how delicate a matter it was, after all, to volunteer counsel to a solemnly-authorized teacher, upon the subject-matter of his own preaching. Traditional veneration, not worn out, for a minister of the Gospel, and a real respect, which could not be withheld from the present representative of that sacred character, awed them in spite of themselves.

Besides those qualities, which we have attributed to Mr. Atherton, his manners, at once courteous and dignified, and a personal appearance calculated to excite interest if not admiration, had their effect. In regard to personal attire, also, he strictly observed that fashion and hue of garb commonly appropriated to his profession ; wisely concluding, that neither he nor his office could gain anything, and that his cause might lose, by breaking down distinctions, — even those which were apparently trivial, — or, in any other way, by putting himself within the exact social relations of the people of the world. He knew how much that world is influenced by form and appearance, and, therefore, he never discharged the duties of the pulpit, arrayed in a style of garment just as well adapted to a military officer in undress uniform.

We have said there was a pause ; and it continued until, on one side at least, it began to be awkward, if not painful. Would it be decorous for us to suspect a person of Mr. Atherton's character, of any purpose of covert mischief in this dilemma ? Upon this point we have no opportunity of consulting you, judicious reader ; and we shall leave you, therefore, to form your opinion upon the facts, reserving also our own judgment. That gentleman sat in an easy posture, gently rapping his right knee with an ivory paper-folder, which he held between his thumb and finger. He was always rather cool, upon occasions when many people get fussy. His features now wore an aspect of imperturbable gravity, though there never were features more capable of the expression of mirth.

His eyes were fixed upon the floor; perhaps to aid him in restraining a tendency to merriment, which sometimes came over him, under ludicrous circumstances, and which would manifestly have been highly unbecoming the present interesting condition of affairs. Glances and gestures had been exchanged between the guests, as of those who would willingly shift upon one another the difficult commencement of an unpleasing ceremony. Hands were held up, and eyes were cast up, and mouths were pursed up, according to the diversified forms of deprecatory expression. An occasional *hem* had faintly proceeded from the throat of Mrs. MacFuzzy, whom fate and the committee seemed resolved to push to the fore-front of the battle, and who had indeed been previously selected for this purpose. Generally, to do her justice, she has not at all to seek, in such cases.

That lady's mind, however, was now much exercised and distracted by her headlong zeal for the cause, on the one hand, and conflicting doubts, on the other, as to the probable reception of her message. As when opposing currents rush together, they expend a portion of their force in uprising foam, so her first fire was rather scattering, when she, at length, on a sudden broke forth, in a high key, but with a rather hesitating manner,—

“Mr. Atherton, sir—I have come—that is, we ladies have come—in fact, sir, we are a deputation of ladies, who have been deputed to come—here—to see you, sir.”

“Really, I am exceedingly obliged both to you and your constituent parties; but you seem disturbed—can I hand you anything, madam? a glass of water? is anything the matter?”

“No, sir,” said she, regaining courage, at the sound of her own voice, as an excited steed is inspired to new animation by the clatter of his own heels,—“no, sir,—we have called upon you in regard to a subject deeply interesting,—indeed, I may say, most harrowing to our feelings.”

“It must, then, interest me; I beg you will not hesitate;

if it be anything of a charitable nature, you know that I am always ready to contribute according to my means. I trust you will speak with entire freedom."

"Sir, it is in regard to yourself."

"I hope not; my personal wants, thanks to the liberality and industry of the ladies, are really all supplied; I am not, as you are aware, entirely dependent on my salary, and have, therefore, ventured to suggest sometimes, perhaps ungraciously, a diversion of their generous efforts, in my behalf, towards the poor of the parish. I say it in no spirit of pride, ladies, but I really am not an object of charity."

"O, no, it is the poor negroes of whom we wish to speak."

"You surprise me — I have heard nothing. Who of them are suffering? I was down to 'Guinea' yesterday, — has sudden calamity befallen any of them?"

This was decidedly wilful, but grew even worse.

"O, sir, it is our colored brethren and sisters — it is the slave" — (and now growing eloquent and a little whining) — "the poor crushed and down-trodden of the earth — the slaves in a land of liberty — the heathen amongst a Christian people."

"Certainly, ladies, you do not suppose I have any slaves; if anything, I am rather subject to bondage myself, in the presence of your fair sex."

"O, Mr. Atherton, how can you trifle on such a subject? so to speak to you, sir!"

"Are you aware of any of my congregation who are slaveholders?"

"No, sir, but we have come to claim of you your strong — yes, sir, your strongest testimony against this curse and bane of our land. We would speak openly with you, reverend sir, and in a friendly spirit; but, to be free with you, we have been pained at the silence and coldness of one whom we have ever honored as a minister, while such an enormous sin prevails 'in our midst.' We would have you raise your voice on

high — cry aloud and spare not — break down the strongholds of oppression, and let the captive go free.”

“ Why, this is asking considerable, if you expect me to do all this ! I really think, ladies, that a cry from my housetop would scarcely be heard where slavery prevails ; nor am I able to see, I confess, why you ladies should become more excited on this particular topic, than for the many other evils, which make part of the wretchedness of this world. Slavery, surely, is no new thing, that we should break out upon it all at once.”

“ Ah, sir, what are other evils to this ? This, sir, is the one great curse, — the ” (referring to a paper in her hand) — “ the one wasting, withering, blighting, gigantic sin, — that calls for judgment on our guilty land.”

“ Excuse me, madam, I am very far from agreeing with you ; I must seriously tell you, this is dangerous doctrine ; there is great danger lest we persuade ourselves, that our zeal for this cause excuses us for the neglect of other duties, and in the commission of many enormities, if not presumptuous sins. The land is guilty enough, and slavery is, assuredly, a great evil, — perhaps greater to the master than to his servant ; but I am sorry to think it does not stand alone, or even hold, in my opinion, the prominent place.”

“ What *can* be worse ? ”

“ Much, which leads people away from their plain duties to God and man, madam ; irreligion, — a sad departure from the sure and solid faith of our fathers ; infidelity, which is making fearful progress amongst the careless of our people ; vain philosophy, which is deluding their souls ; and political corruption, which is sapping fast the very foundations of our excellent institutions ; all these, and each of them, far more pernicious, than the mere external condition of any portion of our population, though to continue degraded and enslaved for many generations.”

“ We are no politicians, Mr. Atherton.”

“ I marvel then, madam, that you should entangle yourself in this matter, which, under our institutions, is a purely political question.”

“ Is slavery never to end ? ”

“ In God’s good time, doubtless, — not a moment before ; — at present, the way seems not clear. His providence, we need not doubt, will provide a mode and a time, correspondent with his own good pleasure.”

“ Is not Providence, as you are pleased to call it, rather slow, sir ? ” broke in a sallow-looking young lady, in green spectacles, who was suspected of reading the German philosophers.

“ I will answer your question, Miss Maze, without formally reproving its irreverence. Providence is generally more apparently slow in its operations, than man’s rash will and blinded judgment are satisfied with.”

“ And must we believe in a government of the world, which permits such evils as slavery ? ”

“ The government of God permits fire, plague, pestilence, famine, sword — suffers the aggravated sins of mankind, and, what to human patience is almost as hard to endure, their aggravated follies. Good, in this world, frequently results from apparent evil ; indeed, all is not unmitigated evil, which seems such to our narrow vision — any more than all is actual good, which wears its semblance.”

“ Sir, sir, ought we not to strive against one great prevailing sin, which we can see and reach ? ” said Mrs. MacFuzzy.

“ So far as we in Eastford are concerned, madam, this evil is distant ; and our duty is at least doubtful ; we ought first to look at home ; we have our own faults and vices and sins ; it might be, perhaps justly, retorted upon us, ‘ First cast the beam out of thine own eye.’ ”

“ Sir, we have not their crimes to answer for ; we are not, I hope, kidnappers ” (looking once more at her paper), “ men-stealers and women-stealers — dealers in human flesh, and in

the bones and sinews, the blood and the souls of men. Is it not the duty of a preacher of the Gospel to urge such wretches to repentance?" triumphantly looking round.

"I fear this kind of appeal, which, you must admit, is not exactly conciliatory, would stand little chance of winning them to a better course of conduct. My experience would teach me, that not in this manner are people generally converted from the error of their ways."

"At least, something could be done; an earnest appeal from you, sir, would rouse a stronger and more determined spirit amongst ourselves."

"I cannot fight like one who beats the air. If you desire me to excite angry passions, already enough inflamed, amongst my own congregation, I must decline. This would only make us worse, and others no better. There is no such preaching in the Gospel."

"Does not the Gospel oppose all oppression?"

"The Gospel emphatically teaches love to all; — no doubt its genuine spirit tends to the removal of all evil."

"But the slaveholders will not hear, because their interest is opposed; that's plain enough!" — with great energy.

"If that be the case, so that they resist the appeals of the Gospel itself, I fear their self-interest is too powerful for us to overcome, by any arguments we should be able to urge."

"Shall we, then, become time-servers? Must we neglect the great work we have in hand? Shall we sit down quietly, let me ask you, while sins of such open enormity are practised in our midst?"

"I wish this were the only presumptuous sin prevalent; but we can, at all events, amend our own lives, and show a good example of Christian love and forbearance, and exemplify our faith by our practice, and so exhibit that 'meek and quiet spirit,' which is, indeed, 'of great price.'"

"Very well, sir. Come, ladies, it is high time we took leave. You must follow your own course, sir; for us, we can

hold no terms with slaveholders; let the timid and the time-serving shrink; the cause of down-trodden humanity shall not call to us in vain; we are ready to resist unto blood, yea, even to suffer at the fiery stake. I cannot countenance slaveholders."

"Let me ask your reflection on a passage which, I trust, has no personal application, 'Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.'"

"Good-by, sir; we have cleared our skirts, — we have done our duty" —

"Manfully, ladies. But I must say to you, in parting, that I have entered into this discussion out of courtesy merely; for, although it is convenient for me in many matters to consult with the *brotherhood* of the session, I know of nothing, in the discipline of our church, which requires me to confer with the *sisterhood*. You may rely upon it, however, that I shall preach the Gospel among you, — in weakness, no doubt, but still faithfully, — according to the strength given me. Good-morning to you, ladies."

We have held ourselves amenable to a strict accountability, reader, to set down this improving conversation, precisely as it occurred, say not far from twenty years ago, in order that you might compare the state of opinion which then existed, with the present aspect of this unhappy dispute. The sole question, at that time, was one of moral right and wrong, for which rational people in New England did not conceive themselves responsible. Some of our fair friends (and we say this out of no disparagement to them; for all of whom, even in their errors, we cannot help feeling an unbounded admiration) certainly held extravagant notions, without seeing, probably, the appalling consequences to which they must inevitably lead. Fanaticism was rampant, but it was weak; and ladies are always weak, when they permit themselves to become entangled in public questions. But, at that period, the brains of no very considerable portion of their male compatriots had

become so bewildered, that they were ready to push abstract theories to the point, not merely of unsettling the ordinances of man and the very constitution of civil society, but many of them foolishly and impiously to arraign, if they do not absolutely deny, the supreme government of the world !

The general sentiment of New England was, we say, that expressed by Mr. Atherton. Unhappily, this question has become very much complicated by subsequent events, so as to assume a most fearful aspect ; which wise men then foresaw, and did their best to prevent. But passion, on the one side and the other, had not then obtained the predominance over reason ; nor had public affairs arrived at that crisis, that only consummate wisdom, and forbearance, and mutual concession, can avert consequences, which all men, in the possession of their senses, must sincerely deplore.

But, as we are often unconsciously and imperceptibly influenced by external circumstances, and even sometimes led contrary to our actually preconceived determination, so it happened, strangely enough, that this matter turned itself over and over, in the mind of Mr. Atherton, until it worked out that famous sermon of his, preached in the afternoon of the next Sabbath, and which may be found in the second volume of his printed discourses. As these volumes have been long out of print, we have been sorely tempted to transfer a passage or two of this celebrated production to our own pages ; but we forbear.

It is rather remarkable, however, that neither Mrs. Mac-Fuzzy, nor Miss Maze, nor, in fact, any of the devotees of abstract benevolence, ever called to thank Mr. Atherton for what was, after all, a literal compliance with their request to preach on this subject.

Dr. Walton was in, however, during the evening of that Sunday, and congratulated his son-in-law, upon his excellent and timely discourse.

“These people, my dear sir, do a great deal of mischief,” he said.

“At home, they certainly do,” replied Mr. Atherton.

“I mean so; if it were nothing more than gadding round, about matters with which they have no earthly concern, to the neglect of their husbands and children, it would be a great grievance, of itself, to have all these old women running about in this fashion.”

“Why, father, they are not all old women!” interposed Mrs. Atherton.

“They are not all clothed in feminine garb, my dear; but they are mischievous, of whichever sex they are. Instead of being benevolent, their minds are really perverse. Their universal benevolence is only a cloak for their universal selfishness. I have no patience with them. A universal philanthropist I consider the greatest rascal going.”

“It would be uncharitable to conclude,” said Mr. Atherton, “that all our friends, who are zealously engaged in so many of the benevolent enterprises of the day, are entirely deficient in good motives. I have not observed, however, that universal philanthropists are practically the most charitable or benevolent people in the world; that they are either more free of their substance, or more gentle in their feelings and demeanor, than others, whose love for man has a more limited range. I trust they mean well.”

“You know of what place good intentions constitute the pavement?”

“Is not that strong sentiment rather intended of those who stop short at good intentions, without taking pains to carry them into effect,—in a word, those who mean, rather than do, what they ought?”

“Certainly; that’s the very case in hand; the philanthropy of these people is abstract, not practical; their philosophy would be degraded by coming down to instances, and their benevolence contracted by relieving individual suffering.”

“I should conceive,” replied Mr. Atherton, “that true Gospel love to the species commences, certainly, with the domestic and social relations; and fulfilling all the law, in this respect, extends itself only so far, as it may be of practical service. Any individual, of the remotest zone, might, in his necessities, enter into this charming circle of affections, and find sympathy and relief. But this kind of love does not spread out and weaken itself into mere speculation. Now, abstract philanthropy is an exercise of the intellectual, not of the moral qualities, and thus it deprives the heart of all real feeling for that which absolutely requires its sympathy close at hand. I do not mean that it is always so, only its natural operation. Universal benevolence, so called, therefore, may make men selfish in reality; it may convert them into fanatics for any impracticable cause, and will probably make them discontented with an order of Providence, which does not immediately conform to their notions; until their universal benevolence has actually left them at last, *having no hope and without God in the world.*”

“This slavery question is a very ugly business,” said the doctor; “it makes everybody ugly who handles it indiscreetly. The indulgence of the feelings it engenders too often converts women into anything but angels, and men, who might have been refined and valuable members of society, into mere brawling and vulgar ruffians.”

“The evils of society,” said Mr. Atherton, “result very much from giving undue prominence to special and partial objects of interest. As the avaricious man, for instance, makes gold his idol, — and he who is over-ambitious worships only power, regardless of the rightful means to acquire or maintain it, — so those associated for moral purposes, too often, — the devotees of temperance, for example, or the zealous opponents of slavery, and so of other things, — are in danger of making these their religion, and of worshipping the golden image they have set up, instead of God. Other objects, quite as vital as their own,

become matters of indifference to them, and are neglected. Under the temptations of human frailty, they may commit all other sins but that which they denounce, and hold themselves excused. One is thus a partisan and a sectary, but not a Christian. He substitutes a single moral purpose, for that great system which includes all, and thus narrows, instead of enlarging his soul."

"The Scriptures, you will observe, undoubtedly denounce particular sins, but their aim and scope obviously is, to produce that state of mind and heart, which excludes all sin, by teaching that love of God, with which sin itself is necessarily inconsistent."

"It is this factious state of society, in our day, which fills the world with countless ills, and betrays men, who profess to be moral and benevolent, to infidelity itself."

"I have no doubt this is the key to many apparently unaccountable contradictions," replied the doctor; "but as to the slavery question, I cannot help thinking it would be far better for us to let it alone, and permit it, as it will, to cure itself, as the natural result of its own burdens and evils."

"Such a course often proves the best with very serious diseases," said Mr. Atherton. "Do you remember, whenever any difficulty occurred at 'the Farms,' between our neighbors, or any gossip or scandal went round, and they came, as they often did, on one side or the other, to lay their grievances before my father, what was generally his advice?"

"To keep quiet?"

"'Keep saying nothing about it;' which is, indeed, a summary of wisdom upon such matters. The enforcement of this doctrine settled a great many troublesome affairs. I always considered it a saying worthy of an ancient philosopher, if it were not, as Lord Verulam might tell us, 'too high for a heathen.' In fact, the sentiment involves something more than merely passively keeping quiet, and seems to imply a sort of positive, and, so to speak, *active* silence; indeed, 'a masterly inactivity.'"

“Come, Julia,” said the doctor, “we have not had our Sunday evening psalm-singing. Find your Village Harmony, my love, and let’s tune our voices.”

“And,

—— ‘tune our hearts, by far the noblest aim,’”

said Mr. Atherton.

“We shall need your voice, George, and Ally’s,” said Mrs. Atherton to those young people, who had been listening with respectful attention to the conversation of their seniors.

And so, — upon that sweetest of Pleyel’s melodies, which Cowper’s tenderest language has consecrated ; upon the glorious and spirit-stirring “Christmas” of Handel ; upon the ennobling and immortal strains of ancient “Mear ;” upon many a sweet and touching measure of our own Billings, and Holyoke, and Holden ; and mounting, finally, upon the pealing swell of Luther’s solemn and world-honored hymn, — as the voices of the young and the old mingled in measured cadence, their hearts ascended far towards the bending heavens, and thus closed the peaceful and soul-reviving hours of a New England Sabbath, in one of its many quiet evening homes.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ Calamities are on us, evil days
O'er our isle darken, but the noble wear
Disaster as an angel wears his wings,
To elevate and glorify.”

MILMAN.

ALTHOUGH Dr. Walton, during the many years of his widowed condition, had maintained a bachelor establishment, presided over by a respectable housekeeper, he did not, by any means, neglect the rites of hospitality. Indeed, in old times, his house had been the scene of much generous and elegant entertainment. The doctor's occasional dinners to a select party of the Eastford gentry, we have been told, were considered highly palatable, whatever might have been thought of his medicine. Jovial, they undoubtedly were; and often, it is said, the doctor's guests have been known to sit, from one o'clock of a winter's afternoon, till dark itself; and even then these young gentlemen did not always find it convenient to repair to the domestic fireside, with their ordinary alacrity and familiar readiness.

The mansion which Dr. Walton still continued to inhabit, at the date of our story, was the brick house, yet preserving the dignified appearance of ancient respectability, situated a little out of town, near the extremity of what used to be called Queen-street, but now rejoices in the more popular name of “Constitution.” The grounds connected with the house extended far into the rear, and, at the bottom of a pretty slope, bubbled a sparkling fountain, with which some

forgotten tradition had connected the name of "Indian Spring." A belt of handsome trees encircled and shaded this fountain, and beneath them the doctor, in his early days, had constructed a rustic and pleasant seat.

But, if the old-fashioned dinners of Dr. Walton were considered agreeable, the tea-drinkings of his good lady, then in the early bloom of the first years of married life, were thought, by her own sex, at least, very much to surpass those genial gatherings. And when lady after lady, long before dark, and each one clad in silken or satin attire, and with hair submitted to a process of adornment far less pleasing than the more recent simple fashion, had duly arrived, and had each been received with hearty but graceful welcome, and at length were all seated around the walls of the best parlor, in those high-backed chairs, which kept our grandmothers straight, — the prospect of entrance into that charmed and charming circle affected bashful natures of the opposite sex with something approaching to awe. The tea, which was then a costly luxury, instead of an ordinary beverage, was handed round by black Phillis in tiny cups, upon a silver salver. The gentlemen seldom appeared until a rather later hour. To be sure, the minister came to tea, and the doctor performed his duty admirably, in aid of the festivities of the occasion.

It is curious to observe how similar the conversation, formally detailed to us by Miss Poulter, was to the turn it is apt to take even now. Of course, there was no more scandal than is permissible by the proprieties of modern times. Indeed, the presence of Dr. Kettleton, the incumbent of that day, would prevent any undue indulgence in the discussion of private character. For, if the minister was metaphysical in the pulpit (and he was a Calvinist of the old school), he was sensible and charitable in the world, and did his best rather to build up the characters of his parishioners, than to permit the little, that the least of them had, to be taken

entirely away. But the fashions were talked over, as indispensable to the well-being of genteel society, and the necessities of the times made our grandmothers politicians, as well as their husbands.

“What a lovely bit of lace!” said Mrs. Walton, admiring the cap of one of her older visitors; “it has the true color, and really looks like a charming piece of Brussels!”

“Indeed, it is, ma’am,” replied Mrs. Dalton; “my great-grandmother brought it over with her, and you can’t tell what trouble it gives me to do it up. It’s really as light as gossamer, and, of course, I should only think of such a thing on very set occasions.”

“You are very polite, ma’am. Does the captain write anything from Paris, as to the style of bonnets which the ladies are wearing?”

“O dear, no! My son is so worried about his vessel, that I scarcely get a word from him on any other subject. Indeed, he writes chiefly to the owners; and, as he is compelled to give up all hopes of her release, I am expecting him home very shortly.”

“O, we shall be really delighted to see him again! I can tell you, Captain Dalton is very much missed by his friends. Here’s the doctor, is always talking about him, and says he’s the finest young fellow that sails out of Eastford; and often wishes he could see him settled down in a home of his own.”

“I thank you, doctor; you are always very kind. But Richard writes that the French privateers are taking our vessels so fast, we shall soon have none left, and then I don’t know what a young sailor will find to do at home. Indeed, he is quite dispirited.”

“Well, Mrs. Dalton,” said the doctor, “we shall all rejoice to see the captain home again, and, no doubt, he’ll find another vessel. And we must submit to these temporary misfortunes as well as we can, and sustain the policy of our good president. To be sure, the conduct of the French is

most outrageous ; but war cannot last forever, and by and by we shall get redress. For my part, I have just heard of the capture of my father's brig, the 'Fair-trader,' and I had myself much more interest in her than I should like to lose, or should think worth talking of in your company, ladies. And, certainly, we'll not allow these things to disturb us now."

Upon the coming in of the gentlemen, all these points of public interest were once more fully commented on, especially over a final glass of particularly excellent punch, which the doctor had the art of concocting, in a manner satisfactory to his guests. But, as they were all staunch Federalists, their denunciations were levelled at the French Directory, and not the government of their own country.

"If our West India trade is thus interrupted, and, indeed, destroyed," said Dr. Kettleton, — who made no objection to a moderate tumbler of punch, followed by a reasonable pipe of tobacco, — "we shall soon find it impossible to obtain either lemons or sugar, except at an exorbitant price."

"Well, sir," replied Dr. Walton, "let us hope things will mend. Congress is doing the best it can for the protection of commerce ; and, though we are weak enough on the water, compared with these rascally French Jacobins, I hope our retaliatory measures will teach them we are not altogether to be despised. Our Yankee ships are already giving a good account of some of them. In the mean time, sir, let me give you another glass of the punch we have, and trust to the next arrival for some more."

"No," said the reverend gentleman, "I fear Mrs. Kettleton will be waiting for me ; and, indeed, your hospitality has already induced us sober people to keep rather too late hours."

On their way home, the various knots of our friends would naturally refer to the subjects of discussion during the evening. The gentlemen, quite a number of whom were in-

terested in commerce, shook their heads at the capture of such a vessel as the "Fair-trader," with her valuable cargo; the ladies lamented the price of sugar; Miss Betty Poulter thought, that so nice a young man, as Captain Richard Dalton, ought not to be permitted to give way to lowness of spirits; it was generally conceded, that Mrs. Dalton's Brussels lace would command a fair price, in case of the worst; and almost all wondered how she could afford to indulge in the luxury of a — great-grandmother — an article, of which few of them had any authentic information, and of which some, perhaps, could take no great pleasure in boasting.

In process of time — and that only too brief — the loss of the "Fair-trader" was followed by that of the "Sally and Hope," and the "Bouncing Bessy;" in both of which craft the doctor had embarked only too much of his fortunes. So that he and many others, to whom similar misfortunes occurred, were compelled to reduce very much the style of profuse hospitality, to which they had been hitherto accustomed.

But the doctor was a man of nerve and great good nature, and of a great deal of philosophy, too, in his way. So far as his losses were unknown, he said nothing about them; and, as to those, of which the public were informed, he laughed them off, and vowed "the mounseers should pay for it one of these days;" and appeared at the bedsides of his patients, with the same gentle and interested manner, and the same cheerful and warm-looking smile, which, they all declared, did them more good than anything else he could administer.

But the redress, of which he was so confident, never came. The advantages which he had enjoyed for commercial enterprise, without active participation in the business, under the auspices of a merchant so intelligent and successful as his father, had now ceased, and he was compelled to return to the pursuits of a profession, at that time more arduous than lucrative. The accumulated calamities, however, had fallen

in such rapid succession, that Colonel Walton himself, once reputed one of the wealthiest merchants of New England, was fain to yield to the irresistible pressure. He had found it necessary, in his declining age, to seek the countenance of the government, which then held, that the emoluments of office were most properly bestowed upon those who had rendered the country the most valuable services. The claims of an old soldier, therefore, who was at the same time competent to the station, were not likely to be set aside, in favor of the pretensions of demagogue or partisan of any particular faction. Upon the intimation of his wishes and necessities, he was appointed collector of the port and district of Eastford, which was then a position of decent emolument and consequent importance.

The doctor, yet in the vigor of his youth, betook himself zealously to the duties of his profession, and his practice had continued for many years to be laborious and extensive, as we have already stated his attendance to be most welcome. Many of his patients were poor; and, to the honor of New England be it said, they have never yet failed to find the physician as kind and attentive to suffering human nature, as the rich. Indeed, the doctor used jokingly to say, he "made the rich pay for the poor."

But, in truth, the mischances, which we have recapitulated, had brought most of the fortunes of Eastford to a state of very considerable dilapidation. With other merchants throughout the country, those of Eastford were urging their own government for indemnities, now assumed by the country, in exchange for stipulations of treaty remitted by France. In the mean time, many of them lived on hope. As this sort of food is unsubstantial, they necessarily suffered want; and with want came despondency and too often despair.

Dr. Walton, however, kept up his spirits, and with them much of the appearance, if not the reality, of prosperity. The hospitalities of the mansion were certainly less fre-

quent; and, if the pinch of the times had not produced a general contraction, would have been thought, perhaps, less liberal than of old. Still, Mrs. Walton rustled in silks, on the surface of which a keen eye might have detected a partially faded lustre. Phillis continued to hand round the identical china tea-cups of ancient times, upon the same silver salver, which at least had lost no gleam of its former brightness; and Cato duly harnessed his master's white horse into the antique, square-topped chaise, the respectable aspect of which was so familiar to every street of the town.

But the reparation for former losses, which had been so long delayed, at length seemed likely to be almost indefinitely postponed. The justice of the claim no one yet had had the hardihood and cold-heartedness to deny. But the ill-condition of the public treasury, which had long been the reason for deferred payment, had been latterly aggravated by the embargo, and more recently by the expenses of war.

In these commercial disasters, to which Dr. Walton had been subjected in his early days, Eastford itself had suffered its full share. At an earlier period, the stirring little town had made rapid progress in the accumulation of wealth, and had reaped all the advantages and consideration which the favors of fortune bring in their train. If the glittering key to riches were only as potent to open the fountain of happiness, as to fling wide the portals, whence issue envy and uneasiness, and carking care, this universal struggle for the winged bauble, so frequently eluding the life-long search, or, if found, so often burdensome and heart-wearing in the grasp, would make the motives for the most strenuous and untiring race after its possession equally apparent and intelligible.

Fortunately, however, perhaps few really reason, and not a very numerous class learn much from the reasoning of others.

So that, really, we see our friends every day go to their graves, who have had, actually all their lives long, only their labor for their pains ; and, on the other hand, the most colossal fortunes (so supposed) suddenly break down, with a tremendous figurative “ crash,”—if such an expression can be used with propriety, where there was truly nothing substantial to break, or to disturb the quiet of the atmosphere, — and yet, the very next moment, their ready followers go forward with a gravity that really respects itself, and enter upon the same pursuit, with all the inordinate desire of their predecessors for that which is not— their faith in the desperately deceitful, their constancy to a dream and a shade.

In the mean time, a great deal of the more substantial part of Eastford’s prosperity, together with as much of the show of it as could not be kept up to any advantage, had passed away. Like other towns on the Atlantic coast, it had suffered

—— “ a sea-change.”

Reversing, however, the effect of that gorgeous and fanciful vision, with which the poet’s imagination has made the ocean-depths to be forever haunted, the transmutations of which we were speaking, instead of being

“ Into something rich and strange,”

had been only from bad to worse ! The policy pursued by the government had been of a character to interfere, most seriously, with the thrifty pursuits of the sea-board, and to drain its resources almost to the dregs. Embargo and non-intercourse had fallen upon Eastford like a mildew. Instead of the busy and bustling mart, and the cheerful voices of seamen on her wharves, heaving merrily to the measured and inspiring tone, these scenes and sounds had long lost much of their ancient spirit, and despondency had taken the place of hope and courage.

From this disaster they had not recovered. Indeed, here

and there, relics of the people of that day yet survive, to dwell upon the sad story of their losses and their wrongs. A few tottering old men, who once had "means in supposition," and "ventures squandered abroad," yet linger on the descending verge of life, and still cling to a miserable hope in the eventual justice of an ungrateful country. The stunning blows of thick-coming misfortunes, the consciousness of a cause too honest to admit of doubt or delay; the heart-sickening and bewildering sense of often-repeated postponement; the cold and cautious counsels of friends, and the unreasoning malice of opponents; and whatever else the heart is called upon most bitterly to endure, have too often broken their spirits, and paralyzed their energies, and disquieted their lives; and while they have pursued their honest purposes, and entreated for their honest rights in vain, the mocking legislation of their country has denied them the simplest and plainest justice.

Yes; let it be proclaimed, as an offset to our pride, and, if iniquity asks for judgment, as a warning to our power, that, for the long period of more than half a century, the influence of selfish interests, and the baseness of political factions, have robbed the very hearth-stones of our citizens of comforts, which should have brightened and cheered them, — of comforts, due to all they yielded in the day of trial, without a murmur, to the common cause. For such sacrifices, honor, truth, justice, and a decent regard for the ordinary pretences of honesty, demand a redress, which now must be tardy, and never can be complete.

In the mean time, what vast sums have been expended on a war, of which the least we can say is, that it ought not to have been permitted to interfere with the payment of such a claim! And how many noble talents have been devoted to self-ends and the vain pursuit of personal and futile ambition, which were bestowed, in order that they might be employed for the good of mankind; and which, if they

had taken this direction, would have called down the blessing of him that was ready to perish, and have secured an enviabic immortality! Alas, it is these vices, which have lowered the standard of morals amongst us, and are fast making us anything but an honest and virtuous people.

CHAPTER XVII.

————— “ Who
Art thou, that steppest between heart and heart ? ”

BYRON.

THE scenes exhibited in the preceding chapter, judicious reader, which, it must be confessed, is rather episodic, serve partly in illustration of the characters and events of this true history, and partly afford some glimpse of a subject, deserving the serious attention of the people and the decisive action of the legislature of this country.

Although now arrived at a period of life considerably advanced, and living in the state of solitary bereavement heretofore indicated, Dr. Walton had invited the circle of his family friends to take tea at his hospitable mansion. It was a true pleasure to visit the genial home of the cheerful old man. His house and furniture remained very much in the condition, in which they had been left upon the lamented decease of his young and lovely wife, so many years before. The same tall clock clicked with distinct accents, which seemed to echo through the ample hall. The same carved and stately chairs appeared to be waiting for their former appropriate occupants, around the solitary apartments; and upon the walls of the best parlor still fluttered, when the open windows admitted the morning air, those hangings of leather, gilded after some foreign fashion — in fact, the *arras* of ancient days. In a word, the whole house, though devoid of the slightest seeming pretension, had an undoubted air of solid and genuine gentility, of a character unapproachable by all the

costly frippery of modern times. Upon the present occasion, like many of the matrons of the town, under similar circumstances, the housekeeper had called in the services of Black Nance, who had often proved an aid, at once ornamental and effective, to the progress of domestic festivities.

Dr. Walton had been joking George, soon after tea, upon the eagerness, with which a young gentleman of his imaginative tendencies, looked forward to the dry study of the law, upon the completion of his college course.

“We had famous lawyers in Eastford, in your younger days, grandfather,” said George.

“Yes,” said the old man, “the most eminent in their profession; no town, I think, could boast of such an array of legal talent. But this was in the time of Eastford’s prosperity. All this is sadly changed; and with our prosperity has gone out much of our spirit and energy; or, perhaps, our deficiency in these qualities has been the true cause of our decline. Why, I remember when thirty or forty private carriages were kept here, where now there is not one to be seen.”

“The society must have been good, then, as it is generally styled.”

“Yes, no doubt, — in a certain sense, yes; there was a vast deal of visiting, and not a little dissipation. The reputation of our legal gentlemen brought a great many young men, to pursue their studies here; some of these were highly connected and of educated and cultivated minds, and not a few became afterwards persons of the highest eminence in public life.”

“You had famous beauties here, also, father,” said Mrs. Atherton.

“I shall not be so ungallant as to say we have them not now, Julia; but certainly there was a circle of very charming young ladies. You know one of our great men, then a student in the town, celebrated a bevy of them in rhyme —

rather satirical, but the piece was thought to be discriminating, though perhaps too severe upon the young girls. Our friend, Miss Dudley's mother, was one of the most beautiful persons of her day, and, if she will permit me to say so, of a character delightful to see preserved in its purity by her daughter. Of your own mother, Julia, I will say nothing"—with a sigh.

"I have sometimes heard it said," observed Miss Dudley, "that our mothers and grandmothers were not, perhaps, as truly refined and cultivated as the present generation."

"In point of learning, certainly, they were deficient," replied the doctor; "they had neither the schools nor the multiplicity of books, which have deluged us of late; but in native good sense and genuine simplicity of character I think the ladies of the past generation were at least the equals of their successors. Their manners were a little open, perhaps, but there was a great deal of sterling worth among the girls I used to know. As to my own sex, I really think they have degenerated; the cotemporaries of my early days were men, often rude in speech and coarse in manner, and they indulged freely in some species of excesses, in which we have seen a partial reformation. But, on the whole, their plainness betokened their honesty; men were not then reduced to their present conventional and artificial character; they did not deem it honorable to 'cut your throat with a feather;' but, if any of that work was to be done, they did it in daylight and after a man-fashion."

"Ah, my dear sir," said Mr. Atherton, "you are running quite counter to the recognized notions; improvement, not degeneracy, is the order of the day,—if we are to believe our modern reformers, the world is about to enjoy the beams of a brighter light than ever yet shone upon it."

"A conceited estimate of our own virtue is not the best test of its possession," replied the veteran doctor.

"And yet, my dear sir, what can we say about degener-

ney?" replied Mr. Atherton. "This has been an old complaint, confined, I believe, to no one period of the world; do you remember what Horace tells us?"

‘Ætas parentum, pejor avis, tulit
Nos nequiores, mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosiore.’

The world, I think, can hardly have been going down, and still down, ever since his day; if so, we should be now in an abyss of vileness difficult to be conceived of."

"On the other hand, if we had gone on really improving, from any given date, our virtues ought to be far more conspicuous, and our superiority more absolutely demonstrable," replied the doctor.

"I suspect the truth is," said Mr. Atherton, "the world alternates, in different ages, between a loftier and a lower standard. When society recedes, and corruption seems to have unusual possession of it, this gives occasion for the complaint of the moralist. In another generation, affairs may be very much mended; and this will account philosophically enough for what has been said, from time to time, for many ages, about the degeneracy of mankind; which, it is obvious, cannot have been a continuous thing. On the contrary, let us hope, there is a general tendency towards improvement. At all events, we have a better authority than Horace on this point, which may give us some encouragement, — 'Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these?' Our business is really to amend ourselves."

In the course of this conversation, our acquaintance, Miss Mary May, had stepped into the hall, which leads through the house to the garden-door, and there had encountered Black Nancy; who, arrayed in her best bib and tucker, had been doing her duty to the assembled guests, and was now enjoying the early summer twilight, near the open door. As Mary stood leaning against the door-post, it may be somewhat pensively, Nancy, with that familiarity, in which per-

sons of her class and color often indulge towards their superiors, approached with the kind intent of offering that sympathy which, no doubt, she supposed was needed upon the present occasion.

Now Nancy, in the days of her virgin innocence, had been per-force compelled to yield to the tender influences of the Cupid of the African race, and had been mistress of the affections of a dusky swain, who, soon after marriage, had left her to the solitude, in which she had continued virtuously to live. Actuated, it is probable, by some vague remembrance of former personal experiences, and conceiving that when a young lady saw fit to look sober, it was because she was uneasy in mind, and that mental uneasiness in a young lady could result only from one cause, her rather abrupt question was,

“Miss Mary, where Massa George dis berry fine evening?”

“Mr. George Atherton is in the house, Nancy, sitting with his grandfather and the others.”

“Seems to me, old folks ought to sit in de house; young folks, dey ought to walk togedder in de air and enjoy demselves.”

“Is that your idea of enjoyment, Nancy?”

“’Deed ’t is, Miss Mary; when I was young lady, O, I was berry proud, I ’sure you! would n’t have nothing to say to young fellers; kept ’em all at arm’s length, ’deed I did; thought myself mighty grand; more I stiffened up, though, worse I felt,” —

At this moment, Nancy was called off by the sudden summons of her principal in the kitchen; and whether it was, that the suggestive nature of her intimations had really touched a kindred chord, we profess not to know; but certain it is, that the desire to indulge solitary reflections of some kind led Mary into the open air and down the gentle path which conducted to Indian Spring.

Having completed the "chore" she had been summoned to perform, and bent upon pursuing her friendly conference with Mary, Nancy had made haste to return to the garden-door, but, instead of Mary, now found George Atherton standing by himself and inhaling the freshness of the summer air. This seemed really almost a coincidence.

"Where Miss Mary, Massa George?" cried the good-hearted creature; "she standin' here, minit ago!"

"I'm sure I don't know, Nancy; she's not in the room with the company; I thought she might be here."

"Was here jes' now; want to see you berry much; must be gone down to Injin Spring, to see if you a'n't there; tink I most see her goin' down now,"—lifting her hand to her brow, and peeping through the shrubbery and down the path.

"Mary wish to see me very much! Good heavens! what do you mean, Nancy?" cried Atherton, without waiting for an answer, but hurrying instantly along the path to the spring. As he descended the slope, he distinguished the sound of voices in earnest conversation; and pausing a moment, that he might not intrude upon others, he was surprised to perceive, through an open space in the foliage, which partly screened the fountain, Mary herself standing, and a gentleman on his knees at her feet. He would have rushed forward, fearing danger to her, at such an hour and in this somewhat solitary spot; but, at the moment, Mary's voice, in earnest but not agitated tones, struck his ear:

"Cruel I am not! Had I encouraged you"—

He heard no more; but, turning on the instant, slowly retraced his steps, and pausing outside the door of the house, so as to be within earshot, in case his services might be needed, he very soon perceived Mary coming up the path alone.

Atherton reëntered the room, where the company was assembled, leaving Mary to follow, which she soon did, looking rather pale, certainly, but composed. His mind was agi-

tated and distressed. Of Mary, certainly, he could seek no explanations. He disdained to make inquiry, on such a point, of a menial, even supposing Nancy knew anything about it, which seemed improbable, from the fact that she had sent him in pursuit of Mary; and, as that lady did not afterwards voluntarily enlighten him as to this mysterious interview, he did not, at present certainly, feel himself at liberty to speak on the subject even to Alice.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Virtus rectorem, ducemque desiderat; vitia sine magistro discuntur.” — CIC.

“He has cast nature off, which was his shield,
And nature casts him off, who is her shame.”

SHELLEY.

COMMENCEMENT-DAY at Camborough, always an occasion of much interest and importance to large classes of our fellow-citizens and their families, excited far more attention, and in days, not very distant from our own, than at present. The institution of its periodical occurrence, as an annual holiday, by the statute of the commonwealth, indicates the light in which our ancestors regarded such an event, and the wholesome respect entertained by them for good learning, and the great benefits and blessings of which it is the instrument. The assembly, which graced this literary festival with its presence, came together, not only from all the vicinal towns, but was collected, in part also, from the very remotest quarters of the land. The dark-eyed and dark-haired southern belle, whose brother or cousin was about to graduate at this most venerable of our literary institutions, with her graceful figure and perhaps languid manner, was often contrasted, in the crowded assemblage, with New England's more precise, but blooming and bonny daughters. And the military dresses of the guard of honor, in attendance upon the chief magistrate of the state, mingled in well, on these occasions, with the more sober-hued exterior of the students and various profes-

sional personages, and with the black gowns of the head of the university and its professors.

Oxton, of course, poured forth its thronging multitude, and long before the hour appointed for the exercises, the various avenues leading towards Camborough, both from the city and the country, were crowded with multiform vehicles of transportation; from the elegant carriage, in which lounged the rich merchant and the ladies of his household, to the plain country wagon, guided, perhaps, by some neighboring young farmer, seated between a couple of bucolical damsels, who were ambitious to see the sights, if not to participate in the literary proceedings of "Commencement-day."

The distance between Eastford and Camborough was so considerable, as to require more than half a day for the completion of the journey. Accordingly, the Atherton party had left home the preceding morning, in order that they might reach the quarters secured for them at Camborough, at a seasonable hour, and enjoy the rest and refreshment of a night, before the moment arrived for the great work of the day of days itself. Mr. George Atherton—now properly entitled to that appellation of manhood, for, if it does not appertain to a young gentleman, about to proceed Bachelor of Arts, we are at a loss to know who may rightfully claim it—occupied lodgings at some little distance from the college buildings. Within this, his own boarding-house, and which was, indeed, a somewhat stately and spacious mansion of an elder date, he had been able to secure accommodations for his father's family, including Miss Mary May, who had been induced to accompany the expedition, "entirely out of curiosity," as she remarked, since she "had never yet seen a Commencement."

The landlady of this establishment was the widow of a once flourishing merchant, afterwards bankrupt, and sometime deceased; and she now employed this laudable means of maintaining her family and of procuring education, that

prime necessity of New England, for its younger branches. The comfortable house of Mrs. Dunham, however, was not entirely devoted to the uses of the students ; but several of its apartments were occupied by such other occasional or permanent boarders, as were induced, by their taste, or desire for literary intercourse, to choose their residence near the seat of the university. Amongst these was Mr. Prior Date, still extant, whenever he saw fit to honor the precincts of his alma-mater with his presence, and Miss Inchskip, a lady of much literary accomplishment and elegant refinement. Whether she had really ever written anything herself, was a point enveloped in the profoundest mystery. At all events, she had not that confidence in the judgment of the world, to induce her to subject herself to the caprice, which too often governs its decisions. She was excessively fond of the society of literary gentlemen, and acted as a sort of foster-mother to the nursing youths of the college. These young persons partook of her æsthetic teas and thin cakes, and formed their own opinions (which they often expressed with an innocent freedom) of the style of discourse and entertainment, with which she strove to foment and nourish their budding genius. The countenance of Miss Inchskip, as her friends often remarked, was "highly intellectual." Her brow, in our opinion, was far too prominent to consist with a true idea of feminine beauty, and long curls of light brown hair, native or foreign, depended by the side of cheeks, too thin to betoken a very recent entrance upon the pilgrimage, weary or otherwise, of this world. She indulged in the singularity of mincing a good deal in her speech, likewise in her gait ; quite as much, indeed, as any conscious miss of tender years ; from one, at which interesting period of life, it was difficult to distinguish Miss Inchskip, when she happened to be in front, upon the same line of march with one's self. But she was a mighty dapper and cheerful body, at least upon all public occasions, and took the deepest interest in all that concerned

the university, its officers, their wives, their children — in short, their domestic affairs in general, and, as has been observed, in the promising under-graduates at that eminent seat of learning.

It seems that, on this evening preceding Commencement, a sort of accustomed *soirée* or reünion was to be held at her rooms, or rather in the public apartments, yielded for the occasion, her own being used merely as ante-chambers; and her liberal invitation, of course, included all the inmates of the establishment. She was, indeed, happy to form the acquaintance of the family circle of so great a favorite as George Atherton, and she now pressed her hospitable intentions upon those, whose personal presence exhibited them in a character so truly prepossessing.

“She sincerely trusted” — this was addressed to Mrs. Atherton — “that she should not be disappointed in the pleasure of seeing her and her charming family present at the little gathering, which would take place in the evening; it was really only a few friends; several of the ladies of Cambridge, her acquaintance, and some of the *élite* of the young gentlemen of the university, and one or two of the officers of the college, who occasionally honored her *petites soirées*. Mrs. Crewell, Rev. Dr. Crewell’s lady, you know, and Miss Fringe, Professor Fringe’s daughter, she was quite sure of, amongst others, — both ladies of high literary taste, — and she thought she might depend on Dr. Griskin, the professor of the Oceanic dialects, and,” turning with a smile to Alice and Mary, “I think, I believe, I may almost say I am positive, — though these poets, these poets are so very uncertain, — we may get a glimpse of Mr. Rosecream himself!”

Those young ladies expressed themselves delighted with the idea of meeting an actual poet, though we are sorry to say, they were compelled to insinuate some inquiries, as crafty as they could contrive, as to a poetical reputation not yet familiarly known at Eastford.

“O,” said Miss Inchskip, “he has written such delicate poetry! I do not show my album to every one, I assure you, for all it contains is original; but, Miss May, if you will please read with Miss Atherton this little gem, ‘Upon the Whiteness of a Cloud;’ it is so sweet and shadowy, that you must put yourself into connection, as it were, with the poet himself, in order to catch the exact idea, — or rather allow me.”

“UPON THE WHITENESS OF A CLOUD.

“Wandering cloud, that down the zenith
Floatest in thy silvery brightness,
Of thy pureness what it meaneth,
Tell, O, tell me of thy whiteness !

“Born thou wast ’mid shadows misty,
Or, where waves in vapory weather,
Boil and heave in tumult yesty,
Blue, green, white, and all together.

“Lingering sunbeams, rich and golden,
Pierce thy bosom’s airy texture,
How, pure cloudlet, wast thou moulden
Of such marvellous commixture ?

“Let vain Art reveal thy story,
Solve thee, O ! and teach thy mission,
To my heart be still a glory,
Lovely doubt and mystic vision !”

“Isn’t that sweet ?”

Mrs. Atherton pleaded the weariness incident to their journey, and the fatigues, to which they might expect to be subjected the next day, but upon the promise of an early release, finally accepted Miss Inchskip’s kind invitation.

The evening passed off very agreeably, and the general topics of such occasions were discussed with freedom and discrimination. The extraordinary heat of the weather, the immense volumes of dust, which commonly enveloped Cam-

borough, during the dog-days, — reminiscences of past commencements, and of promising young gentlemen of those times, who had subsequently acquired distinction in the several walks of life ; together with pleasing anticipations of new successes on the morrow ; these formed the staple material of conversation, diversified by an argument on the subject of “ woman’s rights,” introduced by Miss Fringe, an inveterate spinster, who, it seemed, was a sturdy advocate of the doctrine, which even then found an occasional adherent.

“ For her part,” she remarked, “ women being of the same general physical structure with the other sex, and possessing similar mental powers, which she was not willing to admit to be in any wise inferior, she saw no reason why the sexes should not be placed upon terms of perfect and entire equality. To suppose a gentleman was necessary as an attendant of a lady, upon her walks or drives, was an insult to the natural and rightful independence of woman.”

Mrs. Atherton, to whom this doctrine was novel, modestly suggested, that, “ though, in other countries, the condition of woman was, more or less, degraded, yet, in our own, she had not observed any reasonable ground of complaint, in respect of her personal freedom.”

“ No,” Miss Fringe replied ; “ in point of personal liberty there is not, perhaps, so much to object to ; indeed, I should like to see the man, who would undertake to exercise any restraint upon my free action ! But why, let me ask you, are we not permitted to enjoy the general rights of mankind, to take an equal part in the regulation of our own destinies ; in a word, to vote, to speak, to act, in regard to our own personal and political rights ? ”

“ I believe we should find it very disagreeable,” Mrs. Atherton said, “ if not absolutely inconsistent with our domestic duties.”

“ Not at all ; the Indian women of our own country perform a great many duties, which are assumed by the male

sex amongst ourselves, and yet it does not interfere with their domestic avocations."

"I never heard," observed Mr. Atherton, coming to his wife's rescue, "that the Indians ever called their women to council, however."

"No; in this respect savage and civilized are alike."

"Does not this assumption, by our sex, of the more serious burdens of life, and amongst these I cannot help including political duties, for instance, imply rather an improvement, under our state of society, upon the practices of savage existence?"

"I think, at least, sir, our rights should be thoroughly settled and defined," replied Miss Fringe.

"I will not be guilty of the incivility of urging that this states nothing, since the rights must first be accurately known and universally applicable, before they can be definitely established. But the truth is, my dear madam, woman is most secure, in that vast and vague range permitted to her influence upon sublunary affairs. Her rights really are, deference — courtesy — admiration — tenderness — respect. Her own qualities, if what they should be, and, let me say, most generally are, rarely fail to call forth these elements, which go to make up her happiness, from high and low of our rougher sex. It is not her misfortune to *have no rights*, but her happiness that they are great, really beyond definition. To set them down, therefore, in precise terms, would be only to limit and actually deprive her of much, which she now enjoys without restraint. It would place her in antagonism with man, instead of improving those agreeable relations which now exist; and, instead of elevating, would go far towards reducing her to the sad condition of her lot in all barbarous countries."

"I believe the true way," broke in Mr. Date, "of equalizing men and women, and indeed, all mankind, is to give them a universal language, which might easily be effected, since the

organs of articulation are the same all over the world, and it only needs that sounds shall be so presented to the organs of vision, that, in attempting to enunciate them, the syllables necessarily will form themselves into precisely similar tones."

"Even then," remarked Dr. Griskin, "people still would continue to be white and black, long and short, fat like me, thin like you, Mr. Date, not to mention many other attributes of natural and unavoidable diversity."

"Still, it would tend to render them much more alike," replied Date.

"Alike! good heavens! we are all alike stupid and silly enough now; I beseech you, don't make us any more alike; rather promote every reasonable distinction—

‘All nature's discord makes all nature's peace!’”

In the mean time, the young gentlemen of the college had made all the advances which their courage warranted, to the lovely young ladies of Eastford, whose fresh, youthful and unworn charms inspired their tender bosoms with those emotions, by which beauty always awes, yet attracts us to itself.

— “like Morning led by Night,”—

Ned Shirland, a great friend of George's, pronounced them to be, as Alice passed across the room leaning on the arm of Mary. The other young men, who had been having a time more or less jovial, in one of their rooms, during the afternoon, and were even now a little hilarious, rather rallied Shirland on his *mauvaise honte*; seeing he maintained his position in the corner, which they chiefly frequented. In the course of the evening, they had all been presented, but Shirland kept much aloof, apparently preferring to turn over the leaves of a book of prints, rather than to engage in discourse.

During a moment of general conversation, Dr. Griskin took their hostess on one side.

“My dear Miss Inchskip,” said he, “do you recollect the

story of the Ghoul in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments? You know she was one of those Eastern horrors, — a sort of a cross between a cacodæmon and a phantasma, — who assumed the form of a beautiful female, and got married to a worthy Oriental, and pretended her appetite was so small, she could only pick up grains of rice with a pin; notwithstanding, which she stole out softly, at night, while her husband was asleep, to enjoy some sort of hellish repast."

"Horrible! Dr. Griskin, what are you driving at?"

"Do you know I have discovered somewhat about one of our most interesting friends, not exactly like the Ghoul, to be sure, but which has really horrified me!"

"Mercy on us! who is it?"

"Is it not more important to ask *what* is it?"

"Tell me, Dr. Griskin, I beseech you; I must beg you not to keep me in this state of dreadful suspense!"

"Will you promise secrecy?"

"I do most solemnly; who is the party?"

"Our friend, Miss Fringe," whispering.

"What is it? what is it?"

"I am afraid she is little better than — I scarcely dare to say what" —

"Than she should be?" energetically.

"O, no, indeed, my dear Miss Inchskip; O, no!"

"For Heaven's sake, what do you mean, doctor?"

"Why, I have reason to think she is a — in a word, I believe she is little better than a — cannibal!"

"A cannibal! heavens and earth! what have you seen her eat?"

"By the merest accident, this very day, when she had no idea any one was particularly observing her, — I saw her, my dear madam, with my own eyes, eat, — shall I tell you? — *raw flesh?*"

"O-o-h!" groaned out Miss Inchskip.

"If it had been cut fresh from a living creature, and de-

voured on the spot, it could not have been much warmer or more raw!" in a low and rather tremulous voice.

"What was it? O, tell me what it was! — a child?"

"Child, my dear madam? no, indeed; — what was it? it was *mutton*; but I assure you almost entirely raw, — and she seemed actually to enjoy it. If that is not approaching very near to cannibalism, I don't know what is. In fact, I was dining there, to-day, and the transaction took place at table."

"O, you shall be well paid for this, sir!"

From this incident it will be perceived, that the doctor was rather a practical joker, and that his estimable hostess, who had been often taken in so by him, was a little single-minded.

While Mr. Atherton was engaged in pleasant conversation with a really intellectual and agreeable circle of men and women, connected by various ties with the college, Miss Inchskip, who had, by this time, recovered from the felonious assault of Dr. Griskin, approached Mary and Alice, and suggested to them the advantage of taking a position near the door of the apartment.

"If you would please stand about in this position, Miss May, and you, my dear Miss Atherton, I think you may have a sight of Mr. Rosecream, as he passes down. He is actually above stairs, in my own parlor, and I have been up to speak to him for a moment."

"Will not this gentleman enter the room, so that we may see what a poet is really made of?" inquired Mary.

"Nothing will induce him," replied Miss Inchskip; "indeed, I did not venture to propose it; he is so shy — hush, my dear!"

And as she spoke, with a quick and light step, this object of so much interest and admiration flitted down the stairway and fairly glided out at the street-door.

"Why, that's a will-o'-the-wisp," cried Miss May, laughing, "a meteor, — a flash, — a phantom — anything that is unsubstantial and evanescent!"

Alice looked rather wonder-struck, and inquired if these were the usual habits of this literary lion.

“O, he lives very secluded !” half whispered Miss Inchskip ; “poets, you know, are apt to avoid observation.”

“Not always,” replied Mary ; —

“ ‘Sometime walking, *not unseen,*
By hedge-row elms, or hillocks green,’

seems to have been the wish of Milton ; and Shakspeare, as well as many other great poets, have mingled freely with the world.”

“Perhaps Mr. Rosecream,” said Miss Inchskip, “can hardly yet be called a great poet ; he is rather a young and tender nursling of the Muses, who is cultivating, as yet, his poetic powers, and prefers to live with nature rather than man.”

“Well, Ally, my love,” cried Mary, laughing, as Miss Inchskip left them, “I suppose we country girls can hardly judge about the habits proper for literary shadows.”

“Did n’t you think him rather handsome ?” asked Alice.

“Rather, — that is, rather handsome for a mere gleam. Such a style of beauty is unsatisfactory, however. I confess I prefer more permanent charms.”

“What do you suppose he acts so oddly for ?”

“I rather think from mistaken notions ; I can conceive of a literary person wishing to avoid impertinent intrusion ; but such an excess of shyness either savors of affectation, or else must be merely morbid.”

“Perhaps, this is necessary for him, as Miss Inchskip says, so that he may cultivate his poetical powers, my dear.”

“I have n’t much faith in that. I believe a truly great poet studies life as well as nature ; and I rather think such poets will be found to know more about both, than other people. I am sure this is the case with our favorites, love ; but

certainly, if they are of a true temper, they will live in the light as well as the dark."

As the sun rose, the next morning, it glowed with a heat scarcely sufferable, even at that early hour; but, happily, a slight shower, which soon came down, though it could not attemper the warmth of the summer atmosphere, served to lay the dust, which is often a serious inconvenience upon the flat and dry plain on which Camborough is situated. Very shortly, the quaint old town began to assume an aspect of unusual animation. Upon the common, in the market-place, and by the sides of the road, near the college, tables and benches were arranged, protected either by awnings or matted branches of evergreen, and piled with various simple refreshments, adapted to the bodily wants of hungry and thirsty mortals. "Cakes and ale" were yet held to be sufficiently virtuous, and both ginger and spruce beer liberally furnished forth those festive tables, which thus surrounded and decorated the seat of the Muses.

As the morning hours advanced, those classic shades began to be alive with a swarming and moving multitude. The students, in groups or singly, passed over the intersecting walks of the college grounds, beneath the grateful shadow of their overarching trees. Many a venerable relic of a day long gone slowly paced, or maybe tottered, along those ways, over which his boyish steps had once bounded; and perhaps sadly reflected, how little of substantial happiness or solid good had intervened between that hour of youthful follies and his now almost opening grave. To one, who seemed to be thus musing upon the future or the past, as he slowly made his way along the rapidly-filling street, another — who appeared like the depositary of college annals and chronicler of its passing veterans, and he, himself, far down the file — briskly approached from behind, as if the very forms of all who yet lingered were familiar to his eyes, and, tapping him on the shoulder, cheerfully exclaimed, —

“ Ah, Hadley, you're the next but one — Williston's gone last week, and Cantwork's the only one older than you now left standing on the catalogue! ”

And so he passed rapidly onwards, leaving the muttering senior much more confounded than delighted, by such a very summary, and not, perhaps, over-welcome announcement.

And now, every stall and nook in the crowded stables, and every disposable shadow flung by the branching foliage, is occupied by the reeming steeds, which have drawn the learned and the idle, the grave, the gallant and the gay, to this place of general congregation. But, hark! the bray of trumpets! Martial are the sonorous notes which announce the expected coming of the dignitaries of the land! · *Tam Marti quam Mercurio!* Here is the waving of banners and the flutter of pennons upon the summer air; and, proudly advancing, the long line of scarlet-coated lancers slowly defiles along the crowded streets, as it escorts the carriages containing the chief magistrate and the attendants of his civic and military state. The galleries of the house of worship, devoted to the exercises of the day, have long been filled, and animated by the beauty and fashion, which the outer world lends to grace this festival of learning and honorable ambition. And soon, the long procession, duly marshalled by its appointed youth, preceded by the respected head of the university, and moving with steps symphonious to the mood of military strains, advances up the aisle; and while its foremost ranks ascend the stage, which is to be the scene of the glories and honors of the day, its flanks distribute themselves amongst the pews, which occupy the body of the house.

The further order of proceedings and exercises it might be tedious to recount. We have the heart to bestow it all upon our readers, but this our apprehensions of their patience forbid. The Atherton party, by the happy efforts of George, and his college chum, Edward Shirland, had been fortunate enough to secure seats directly opposite the stage. After the

successful event of his own part, the latter young gentleman, by superhuman exertions, had worked his way to the immediate vicinity of his friend's family. As the moment approached for George's appearance upon the stage, their hopes and fears and nervous agitations may be easily imagined by those who have been present on similar occasions, with feelings enlisted for those who were dear to them.

At length, the voice of the President was heard, — "*Expectatur Oratio, in lingua vernacula, a Atherton,*" — whereupon, that young gentleman came gracefully forward, and, duly bowing towards all appropriate quarters, proceeded to the delivery of the speech, which had caused so much interest and speculation among our friends at Eastford, during the preceding vacation. His appearance certainly was the occasion of a flutter among other young ladies than those of his own party.

"O, he's a dear, — a darling!" cried Mrs. Flyter, one of the fashionable and semi-literary ladies, whose seat adjoined that appropriated to the Athertons. This remark, delivered with considerable distinctness, was unavoidably overheard, and, whatever other effect it may have had, caused a gentle flush upon at least one pair of cheeks in the party. The oration, though exceedingly beautiful and effective, these pages are not entitled to record. Suffice it to say, that it was listened to with profound and unaffected admiration, interrupted, at no very long intervals, by decided manifestations of applause from the gentlemen, and by the waving of handkerchiefs and flutter of fans, on the part of the lovelier portion of the assembly. But when, at the close of his address, the turn of the discourse led him to the complimentary allusions usual on such occasions, — to the head of the college, for example, and the other noted personages on the stage, and especially to the *beaux yeux*, all intently regarding the youthful and distinguished-looking speaker, — he thus proceeded (as we have ventured to set down from our minutes), addressing the

governor of the commonwealth, whose own acknowledged literary abilities and successes had aided rather than retarded his political advancement.

“ But the theory I would advance surely needs no speculative argument for its support. Honored as our venerable mother this day is, by the presence of those who have risen to no little eminence in the republic of polite letters, and by you, sir, especially ” (turning to his Excellency), “ yourself the living example of what literature may do for the honor of him who truly honors her, — you, whose brow, in the halls of legislation or in the chair of state, has been still wreathed with flowers, plucked at the very sources of the Pierian spring, — you, sir, the charms of whose eloquence have cheered and adorned, with unknown graces, the gravest political debates, — we have these living arguments - which look, speak and breathe, — which act amongst and with us, though far above us, and are no more to be doubted than the genial glow of nature which we feel, — no more to be denied than the beams of heaven, which embrace us with their glory, and animate us with their truthful light.

— ‘ *Solem quis dicere falsum
Audeat ?* ’ ”

When, we say, this highly eloquent sentence was pronounced, crowned with its appropriate Latin quotation, which some of the audience, certainly, understood, the applause was of that rapturous and tremendous character, which could leave no sort of question of Atherton's complete and overwhelming success. And many a glance of more than doubtful tenderness was cast upon him and his brown curls, as, with dancing eyes, he rejoined his father's party, at the close of the commencement exercises.

“ Who is this young Atherton, who created such a sensation to-day ? ” demanded Mrs. Flyter, who attended a soirée at the president's mansion that evening, accompanied by two

blooming scions of her house, — one in pink, the other in straw color, — of one of her fashionable acquaintance.

“Don't know, ma'am, 'pon my word,” replied Dick Simecox, whose father was a respectable grocer in the city of Oxtou; “young gentleman from the country, I believe;” and he settled his cravat, as he settled into some very improving conversation with the Misses Flyter.

“But what is his family? What are his connections?” persisted Mrs. Flyter, whose own father was a worthy farmer, and whose husband exercised the profitable calling of a stock-broker and note-shaver.

“Think I have heard he was son of a country minister, ma'am; can't tell anything certain about these people,” said Dick.

“O! Lizzy, my dear, it is hardly worth while to be at all desirous of introductions to these young men who graduate and pass out of sight, and have really very little hold upon society, and probably must make their own living.”

“Mr. Atherton's father, madam,” said Dr. Churchman, who had heard part of this conversation, “is a very eminent Orthodox clergyman at Eastford; his grandfather was Colonel Atherton, a distinguished officer of the Revolution, and his ancestors, I believe, have been quite respectable and useful members of society, from the first settlement of the country.”

No opportunity for an introduction — for which Miss Lizzie Flyter was really anxious — occurred, however, as the Athertons, before the hour appointed for the soirée, had been long on their way towards Eastford.

CHAPTER XIX.

“Præsentiorem conspicimus deum
Per invias rupes, fera per juga,
Clivosque præruptos sonantes
Inter aquas, nemorumque noctem,
Quam si, repostus trabe sub citrea,
Fulgeret auro, et Phidiaco manu.”

GRAY. “*Ode.*”

——— “Now reigns,
Full-orbed, the moon, and with more pleasing light
Shadowy sets off the face of things ; in vain,
If none regard.”

MILTON. “*Paradise Lost.*”

AT the conclusion of the last chapter, our friends — for so, we trust, we may all consider them — had left Camborough, with its pleasures and triumphs, behind them. It had been determined, however, that they should spend the night in Oxton, and, in the morning, pass down to Indian Shore, for the purpose of enjoying the sea-breezes and other attractions of that famous watering-place, for a day or so, on their way towards home. Mr. Atherton conceived this indulgence due to George, after the anxieties and successes of Commencement. That young gentleman and the young ladies were all quite earnest for a taste of sea-shore pleasures, and, though they would not, perhaps, avow such a motive, a sight of the fashionable society, which resorted to that rocky peninsula for its summer retreat.

Upon arriving at Oxton, towards evening, the coachman was directed to drive to the Tripletop-House, then in the full

flush of its primeval glory. In those days, this celebrated hotel held a preëminent rank amongst the hostelries of our land, and, we suspect, of any other, and was usually thronged with its multitude of guests from all quarters of the country, and various parts of the world. Indeed, all Oxton was justly proud of "the Tripletop;" and its solid front of gray granite and handsome Doric portico really deserved their admiration, in spite of some partial fault in the proportions of the façade. But it was the interior management which especially deserved and commanded their approbation; and the young gentlemen of Oxton pronounced its name with an air of conscious superiority, and lounged into the Tripletop of an evening to meet their acquaintance, and to have a bit of chat upon the news, or to enjoy the refreshment of a cigar, as the London dandies visit their clubs; and, perhaps, in Oxton now, the same class resort to establishments which bear a similar name; for we know not how they are conducted, since, being a married man, of course we do not visit them. Indeed, this truly popular hotel was the fashion, — magic word! which often converts ugliness itself into something to be admired, and gives to inherent vulgarity an undoubted currency, and often a very leading and eminent position in this easily-deluded world.

But, at all events, the Tripletop was an admirably-conducted establishment, famous for its capital dinners and superb wine (*illius "dum regna manebant"*), and, above all, for that spirit of genial and liberal hospitality, which really lulled the guest into forgetfulness that a bill was to be paid, until that inevitable document made its appearance; and then drew from the opening purse the ungrudged, and — O, wonder of hotels! — the willing and rather grateful coin!

Indeed, the manners of the house were well-bred and high-toned. The landlord himself, or some one of his ready aids, — we really forget which it was in the present instance, — but one of these constantly received the coming guest, and sped him who was parting, with genial courtesy, at the well-

attended door. So that actually the Tripletop-House seemed more like a home, anxious to receive the returning inmate within its kind and familiar walls, than, as too often proves the case in modern inns, a mere money-getting and money-paying place of bargain and sale, — and frequently sharp and rude at that, — in which we believe that hosts have sometimes “entertained angels unawares,” who by no means received the treatment suited to guests of this description.

Of course, the bachelors, — regular inmates of the establishment, — who caught a glimpse of the girls as they passed in, exchanged some complimentary remarks, which we have observed that pretty faces elicit from the most inveterate and venerable of this melancholy race ; and we should not wonder if some, to whom age and custom had accorded privilege, strolled into the drawing-room in the evening, in the hope of warming their chilly hearts with the sight of objects, indeed well worthy of their unbounded admiration. The party, however, retired early, and, at a seasonable hour in the morning, took their departure for Indian Shore.

“Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,
Were never folks so glad,”

as, over the long and sounding beach, the echo of the hollow hoofs reverberated upon the summer air. For ourselves, we confess that we know of few pleasures so exhilarating, as a rapid drive with generous steeds over a hard and sandy beach, along an open shore, and to inhale the freshness and delight of ocean in his hours of placid mirth. The young ladies were in high glee, but screamed slightly, now and then, as the gentle breakers dashed over the fetlocks of the scarcely swerving horses. But, after a drive, which they declared to be “perfectly charming,” they duly arrived at the hotel, upon the piazzas of which many of the guests were assembled subsequent to the morning meal, and were now seduously contriving how to get through the laborious hours of another unoc-

cupied day. Amongst these proved to be the Flyter family, which, it seems, made their summer quarters at Indian Shore, and had merely run up to Camborough, to attend the Commencement services, and returned late on the previous evening; and Edward Shirland, who had taken an early start that very morning, under the idea that his own health would be benefited by a short run upon the beach, in the company of the Athertons. His intention to do so, he had announced at Camborough to somewhat incredulous ears; and now the greeting between him and his friends and his friends' friends was cordial and rather merry. Amongst a portion, at least, of the Flyter party, the new arrival produced some sensation.

"O, ma!" cried Lizzy Flyter, "that *is* George Atherton, and his father and mother and sisters, I suppose, who sat near us yesterday. Pa *must* get introduced to Mr. Atherton, — I *should* so like to make their acquaintance!"

Mrs. Flyter, in the mean time, had scrutinized the party closely through her glass, — that is, the ladies of the party, — and the result of her investigations seemed doubtful; for their travelling garb was entirely appropriate to the uses of a journey, plain and unostentatious, without a solitary ornament to be seen upon the person of either; and Mrs. Flyter was a lady, who scarcely understood why those who were lucky enough to possess diamonds, and other beautiful articles of jewelry, should not, on all fair occasions, claim for them that open admiration of the world, which she held to be the due of them and their fortunate owners. Still, the air of these ladies was so truly elegant, in the midst of their simplicity, that to her mind it really presented a rather puzzling case.

"My dear Lizzy," said Mrs. Flyter, lowering her glass, "I have often tried to impress upon you the importance of restraining the too ardent expression of your feelings. I dare say your father would find no difficulty in making the acquaintance of this gentleman, who appears certainly

respectable,— this Mr. Atherton,— Atherton seems a good name”—

“O, so aristocratic!” broke in Miss Flyter.

“The name is well-sounding enough, my dear. Dr. Churchman certainly spoke in high terms of his family; but then he is only a country clergyman, probably with a small salary. Mrs. Atherton certainly has rather an air.”

That lady had indeed passed with some dignity into the house, under the somewhat impertinent stare of Mrs. Flyter’s glass; and a present formation of acquaintance seemed hopeless; for the party almost immediately proceeded to the beach, with the intention of making the most of the time they proposed to devote to the pleasures of the sea-shore. Of course, Edward Shirland accompanied them; and one would really judge, from his demeanor and laborious efforts, that the chief delight of life, to any rational mind, must consist in picking up shells for the special benefit of Miss Alice Atherton, who took them very demurely and threw them all away again, except a very few which she pronounced particularly pretty. Their long and merry morning scamper, however, rendered repose welcome for the afternoon. But while they were lounging on the piazza, after tea, by some of those innocent arts of management, which ladies know so well how to put in practice, at such places, the younger people of the several parties were soon upon terms of reasonable familiarity. Indeed, Miss Flyter contrived to engage Miss May in a little promenade, along the piazza, with her own arm affectionately wreathed in that of the dark-eyed beauty of Eastford.

“O, Miss May!” cried she, “you are really acquainted with Mr. George Atherton.”

“Yes,” replied Mary, laughing, “I think I may claim some fair acquaintance with him; we have been almost brought up together.”

“How delightful! Is n’t he a perfect love?”

“Why, as to his perfections, he is certainly a very excel-

lent young man ; but I doubt if he has given much attention to the subject of love."

"O, I don't meant so ! but is n't he, — I hardly know what to call it, — but one of those, you know, you would go distracted for ?"

"He is certainly very amiable and prepossessing," said Mary, rather wincing ; "but is it not a little dangerous to let young men know you hold such ideas about them ?"

"You are so cool, Miss May ! But, if you have been brought up with him, I suppose he seems to you more like a brother, or something of that sort. Of course, I would n't have him, for the world, hear what I say ; but I declare I think him perfectly charming ! and then, such a sweet name, — George Atherton !"

"You have had very little means of forming a correct opinion, it would seem to me."

"Why, I saw him yesterday and to-day, and heard him speak, and had a very fair opportunity of comparing him with the other young men. Do you believe in love at first sight, Miss May ?"

"Yes, such a thing is possible, I suppose, but hardly creditable, I should imagine, to our own sex, who ought to hold themselves worth seeking, if worth dying for."

"How odd you are ! and what old-fashioned notions ! By the way, what is your Christian name, Miss May ?"

"Mary."

"Mary ! — Mary May ; what a very pretty name ! May I call you Mary ? yes ? I thank you ; and is Eastford an agreeable place — that is, do they have plenty of balls and parties and dancing ?"

"No ! I fear you would think it excessively stupid ; we have very little of that sort of amusement."

"Why, what do you do ?"

"We read and walk, and attend to domestic affairs a little, and sometimes make calls, and occasionally go a shopping ;

and then we have a sewing-circle, now and then, for some charitable objects."

"How good!" tossing her head a little.

"Do you object to goodness, Miss Flyter?"

"O, no! but it must be so tedious! But, positively, do you have no parties?"

"O, sometimes; but then we have very few young gentlemen; as soon as they grow up, they run away to the city. Only conceive, Miss Flyter, of our distressed condition,—three or four young ladies, and sometimes more, after an evening party, cap-a-piē in shawls and hoods, and armed with umbrellas and perhaps a lanthorn, forming themselves into platoons for the mutual defence, and marching home, under the escort of at most one young gentleman, and he, perhaps, not very efficient!"

"Horrible! but now you will have George Atherton,"—such was the rapid familiarity at which this impulsive young lady had arrived.

"Yes,—he will be a great hero amongst us, and no doubt will save us from many perilous mischances!"

At this moment, that heroic young gentleman advanced and announced the intention of the others to witness the moon-rise upon the ocean, from the rocks, at no great distance, in which interesting expedition these two young ladies readily engaged. They were also accompanied by Mrs. Hylowe, an older sister of the Misses Flyter, recently married to their father's junior partner, distinguished subsequently as the chief active manager in the well-known firm of "Flyter, Hylowe and Grubble;" and Mr. Bundle likewise attended them, a young Englishman, who was, what is called, we believe, "a drummer" to some manufacturing concern at home. He looked, it was thought, with favorable eyes upon Miss Elizabeth Flyter, with the full approbation of her parents, as his prospects were rising; but met with very little encouragement from that really pretty young lady. Indeed, she manifested

an unaccountable contempt for trade, and seemed to concentrate within herself all the sentiment, and what she called "heart," of the family.

The evening was soft as summer and the gently-breathing, sweet south-west could make it. The peaceful wave below sent up only its faintest murmur, as it fell, with measured cadence, upon the grating shore. A soothing quietude, like the hushed repose of a true Elysium, reigned in the deep, wild heart of slumbering nature. The party was only just seated upon the elevated rocks, when the moon peered above the plane of the scarcely-rippled sea; and, slowly ascending, full, round, and glowing with ineffable loveliness, at length repaved with silvery light the level surface of the tide.

"How heavenly!" exclaimed Miss Flyter, in a voice, to which generous enthusiasm had imparted some agitation.

"Very nice — very nice!" responded Mr. Bundle, in quick but rather impassive tones.

No doubt that gentleman intended to manifest his absolute approval of this pleasing exhibition of nature; but, as the entire range of an Englishman's expression of liking and dislike (we mean, such Englishmen) — including positive, comparative and superlative — is from "nice" to "nasty," and so *vice versa*, and, as the latter word was clearly inapplicable, he seemed to have no choice. It was a species of injustice, therefore, as well as indecorous, for the young people to cavil at his language, as they manifestly did, by peals of laughter sufficiently explosive.

"What is it?" cried he, slightly coloring; "dear me! what is it? I don't see anything."

"Oh-o-o," laughed out Lizzy Flyter, "to think of any one calling the moon on the water 'nice,' just as you would speak of a dinner or a new bonnet!"

Mr. Bundle controlled his temper handsomely.

"Why, Miss Flyter," said he, "I see nothing to laugh at — nice — nice" — (considerately) "I really think it nice."

Edward Shirland, here, as Madame de Staël would say, "*prit la parole.*"

"Mr. Bundle, I suppose it was rather uncivil to laugh; but the expression was so unusual with us, as applied to such a subject—"

"Unusual! we always say so, sir. It's an English word, I believe."

"Undoubtedly; but we should as soon think of calling Niagara 'nice,' as he tumbles into the foam, with all his lakes about him."

"I've seen Niagara, too; and I thought it *nice*;" a little warmly.

"We must congratulate ourselves, I suppose, that you did not consider it *nasty*."

"Now you are using a vulgar word, Mr. Shirland," said Miss Flyter, offering a slight diversion.

"I assure you I am only quoting."

"I had no idea," said Mr. Bundle, "that you Americans were so very — nice — there I've got it again — in the use of language."

"There it's appropriate," observed Shirland.

"But I have often heard you laughed at, in fact — dear me! — a good deal, about some of your expressions."

"We are very apt to see the faults of our neighbors, at least," replied Shirland.

"There's more truth than poetry in that," said Mr. Bundle.

"What was your remark?" interposed Mr. Atherton.

"More truth than poetry, I was saying, in our seeing our neighbors' faults rather than our own."

"Excuse me, Mr. Bundle, but I think you might as well say, 'More truth than logic,' or 'more truth than algebra.' Pardon me, if I ask you if you know what poetry really is?" This question, we confess, may seem impertinent, but was, perhaps, justifiable.

“Why, yes; I think so, — there’s ‘The Lady of The Lake,’ a very interesting work — very interesting,” was the reply.

“But you have not given Mr. Atherton your definition of poetry, Mr. Bundle,” said Miss Flyter, now deeply interested.

“Why, poetry I take to be — h-m — to be — fiction.”

“And may I ask you what is fiction?” inquired Atherton.

“Fiction is falsehood, of course.”

“Not necessarily; in fact, it is *creation*, — *forming*, *framing* or *making*; and the *elements* of the *creation* may be all true, — as true, if you please, as the clearest proposition of Euclid. Many persons consider the book of Job, for instance, an allegory; that is, a fiction, — mind, I do not, — and so, of the parables; but they are, nevertheless, the most admirably contrived vehicles of truth.”

“Do you mean to assert, sir, — Mr. Atherton, I think it is — yes — Mr. Atherton — do you say, sir, that poetry is not fictitious writing?”

“I mean to allege that poetry is abstract truth, — that is, when it is true poetry.”

“I have often heard the sentiment used, however, which I expressed.”

“Yes, — it is a true Yankeeism; and comes from not understanding the meaning of terms, nor, perhaps, of things.”

The Eastford young ladies had enjoyed this conversation exceedingly; for, of course, they could not much admire the pert and rather presumptuous ignorance of Mr. Bundle, and besides their natural affection for George, they felt not a little proud of that truly sensible and accomplished young gentleman.

“What a perfectly lovely evening it is!” exclaimed Alice. “I quite envy you, Miss Flyter, the pleasure of coming down to enjoy this scene, whenever you choose.”

“O, I assure you, I don’t come half so often as I should like,” said Miss Flyter; “that is, if we could have such agreeable company.”

"The evening is really perfect; it is so soothing!" said Mary. "One can hardly imagine the sea could ever be stormy, it is hushed now into such a scarcely audible ripple; and how gloriously the moon flings its flood of splendor over the perfectly smooth expanse!"

"I hate the moon!" broke out Mrs. Hylowe, who had exhibited frequent symptoms of discontent, and had, more than once, proposed the return of the party to the house.

"Hate the moon!" replied Atherton. "Is not that rather an unreasonable prejudice against a very inoffensive luminary?"

"At any rate, I know I hate it," said she.

"Well," said George, laughing, "I must say, I know of no parallel judgment on such a subject, except that in 'Paradise Lost,' where a certain personage, more brilliant than respectable, pronounces a similar denunciation against a greater light —

'O, sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams!'

I recollect," he continued, slyly glancing at Mary, "once hearing a young lady, Mrs. Hylowe, declare that she hated logic, which struck me as rather a strong mode of expressing her distaste for a chief implement of reason; but I suppose she only meant to indicate her preference for sentiment and feeling. Your intense dislike of the moon, however, if you will permit me to say so, seems to me a very unaccountable vagary."

"It is so pure and innocent looking!" the young ladies exclaimed.

"But it looks so yellow!" persisted Mrs. Hylowe; "and then it always makes me melancholy; and I can't bear to come down to the rocks, and see it rising so slow and still over the sea, and making everybody so quiet!"

"Your objections, certainly, are a tribute to the moon's influence; and though I am aware how disagreeable the idea

of any sort of submission is to many modern young ladies, I should suppose you might find it less irksome, when the sway is exercised by a power, popularly and mythologically classed among your own sex," said George.

"Well, I can't bear it, at any rate, and should a great deal rather have lights in the parlor, than sit under the brightest moon that ever shone."

As there seemed to be no rational reply to this outburst; and the evening was really drawing late, the party moved towards the hotel. Miss Flyter protested she had never passed such an agreeable evening. She gayly insisted upon collecting the various judgments of the company upon the apparent bigness of the moon; which, measured by their separate organs of vision, varied, as usual, from the size of a common dinner-plate to the circumference of a cart-wheel. Mr. Bundle thought the moon looked hardly so bright or so large as in England; especially in Yorkshire, in one of the Ridings of which, it seemed, he had passed the earlier period of his youth.

"Why," said Alice, "I should suppose it would be brighter; for I thought our climate was noted for the clearness and purity of its atmosphere."

"That might tend to diminish its apparent size, Miss Atherton," observed Shirland, who professed to be a bit of a natural philosopher.

"I think the moon," said Mr. Bundle, "has a much finer effect over ruins, and amongst old forests, under the trees, you know; you have no ruins in this country."

"No, not yet," replied Shirland; "but we have forests enough."

"I have never seen your forests."

"No, they do not grow on the sea-shore, with us, or have been all cut off; but you must go into our back-country, if you wish to see trees."

“Taller,” said George, “than any

‘Tallest pine,
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast
Of some great ammiral.’”

“It’s really a nice moon, — very nice!” — said Mr. Bundle, amiably and handsomely, looking upward towards that luminary, as the party ascended the steps of the piazza.

Within the house were music and dancing, for such as chose to participate in those amusements. After all, Mrs. Hylowe seemed to take as little delight in what man or woman could do for her entertainment, as she did in the charms of natural beauty. Indeed, the whole party was somewhat fatigued, — the Eastford portion of it by the active exercise of their physical and moral qualities, the rest by the “labor dire” and “weary woe” of doing nothing, — and all soon sought the refreshment of sleep.

CHAPTER XX.

“The love of letters is connected with an independence and delicacy of mind, which is a great preservative against that servile homage which abject men pay to fortune.” — HENRY MACKENZIE.

“‘Yellow-dross!’ interrupted Alexius. ‘Do they call that noble metal, equally respected by Roman and barbarian, by rich and poor, by great and mean, by churchman and layman, which all mankind are fighting for, planning for, intriguing for, and damning themselves for, both soul and body, — by the opprobrious name of yellow dross? They are mad, Agelastes, utterly mad.’” — COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS.

THE departure of Mr. Atherton's family had been fixed for the next morning; but an incident occurred, which caused the delay of this purpose for several hours. It seemed that, during the night, one of the boatmen, who usually supplied the table of the hotel with fish, and often took parties with him on his piscatory excursions, had made a misstep in climbing the slippery rocks, and fallen, so as to break his leg, besides receiving other dangerous hurts. As this man was quite a favorite, in consequence of his skill and good-humor, much sympathy was enlisted in his behalf and that of his distressed family; and Mr. Atherton, in his character of clergyman, upon learning the occurrence of the accident, had made an early call, to offer them such consolation as he could bestow. Much conversation took place upon the subject of the misfortune in the course of the morning; and since the sufferer was altogether dependent upon his daily labors, it was proposed to raise a sum of money, off-hand, to meet the immediate necessities of his family. The people at the house generally entered into this scheme with readiness, and sub-

scribed their respective quota, according to their several means and disposition.

It seemed to be quite an object with some to induce Mr. Flyter, the wealthy head of the Flyter family, to aid in this benevolent intent; although there were certain winks and sly looks, among those who were probably the knowing ones, when this idea was suggested. That respected and very prosperous gentleman was not present at the discussion of the subject. Before its introduction he had put on his spectacles, and had become much interested in that column of the morning paper which exhibited the doings of the previous day, at the "Second Board." In the midst of the animated discussion, however, and soon after the plan of the subscription was started, other avocations had apparently called him elsewhere, and he had quietly slipped out of the room, without disturbing anybody. Those who were not rich had put down what they saw fit, and it was now proposed to request Mr. Atherton, as a stranger and a clergyman, to open the matter to Mr. Flyter; to which proposition the former gentleman, knowing nothing to the contrary, made no objection.

Mr. Atherton accordingly proceeded upon his mission. There was no great difficulty in discovering Mr. Flyter, who was, in fact, only at the extremity of the piazza, with the newspaper in his hand, and still apparently engaged in the consideration of the stock market. Upon broaching the subject, Mr. Flyter at once admitted the just deserts of the object of charity; indeed, he, or members of his family, had been, more than once, on fishing excursions with the man; but there was a difficulty in regard to this project peculiar to himself.

"It would give me pleasure, my dear sir," said he, smiling graciously, "if I had not a *rule* upon these subjects;—I have a rule, sir; and, although it is rare that an object of higher desert offers, or one which I should be more glad actively to favor; yet, that, you know, sir, would be a devia-

tion; which, of course, you would not recommend. 'Straight to the mark!' that's my maxim, sir."

"I would suggest, however," replied Mr. Atherton, "that a deviation, as you style it, on the side of benevolent action, could hardly involve any moral delinquency."

"Surely you would not advise a deviation from principle; and there's my rule, my dear sir!"

"Will you permit me to ask you, Mr. Flyter," said Mr. Atherton, not a little amused, "why you have ever framed such a rule? And, if you find its practice so uncongenial with your inclinations, why you do not set it aside at once?"

"What! break the rule, sir? O, I could n't think of that! I trust I am a man of too much principle for that, sir. I consider a rule as a principle, and I hold to principles, sir. You perceive that, without such *rule*, I might naturally be called upon to investigate numerous cases, all of which it would be impossible for me to relieve; and I deemed it best, therefore, to have one fixed, settled, invariable *rule* on this subject, which, as I said, is my principle; and I take it, you do not expect me to violate principles, my dear sir? Straight to the mark, sir!"

"No sir; I shall not expect it; and as, of course, I can have no doubt of your charitable disposition, *apart from the rule*, I wish you good-morning."

In fact, by keeping his maxim steadily in view, Mr. Flyter had really reached his "mark," which was, a large fortune; he had been restrained by no obstacles; he had made *gold his hope, and had devoured widows' houses*. As to the straightness of his path, that was another matter; few courses could have been more devious and crooked.

Not long after dinner, the Athertons took their departure in an extra carriage, hired for the performance of their journey of between thirty and forty miles, rendered necessary by their starting at an irregular hour. Not a few were sorry to see them leave; since real worth generally has its influ-

ence upon those who are themselves worthy; and quite a number lamented the loss of the pretty girls of Eastford, until the next arrival, or some other incident of the day, called off their attention from this cause of grief. Miss Lizzy Flyter was inconsolable. She was really a very good girl; a little vain and affected, but with considerable natural feeling, and, on the whole, not more uninteresting than young ladies in her station often are. The interchange of letters she had vainly proposed both to Mary and Alicc, who professed duties at home, as a reason for politely declining her correspondence; but there seemed some prospect of their meeting in the course of the following winter, during a visit the girls had half engaged to make to certain of Miss May's relatives in Oxton; or perhaps, Miss Flyter suggested, they might meet in Eastford, where she had some distant connections. To Mr. Bundle their departure proved a dark hour; for the face of the light which he worshipped — so far as he was concerned — suffered a total eclipse. Edward Shirland had promised a visit, at no distant date, to his friend at Eastford. With the rest of the Flyter circle the parting was so civil, as to show there was no feeling on either side. There are many persons in this world, very much better than the Flyters, to whom, of course, you say, "How do you do?" when you meet them; and there the intercourse ends. It would proceed no further, if you met them every day for fifty years. Why should it? You have nothing in common with them, except that very common thing, the weather; and there, and there only, can you feel with them at home.

The character of Mr. Flyter was a little more positive. In the course of their homeward-bound conversation, Mr. Atherton laughed with the rest, over the ill success of his morning's mission to that person, and remarked,

"I really never happened to meet any one more anxious to secure a handsome sum to die upon."

"And yet, sir," said George, "I believe he stands ex-

tremely well with society in Oxton. I have often heard the young men of my acquaintance speak of them as among the leading families."

"Certainly, my dear," said Mrs. Atherton, "his family ought not to be involved in the discredit of Mr. Flyter's meanness."

"I only wish, mother," replied George, "that any real discredit attached itself to him, on account of his character and conduct. Such meanness as his is only too contemptible."

"No doubt," observed Mr. Atherton, "it is unworthy of a rational and accountable being. But, not to discuss individual character too closely, the point which you suggested just now is one of very great importance; I mean how far wealth ought to be allowed as the foundation of what is called the aristocracy of a free country."

"It seems to be taking the leading part now, sir," replied his son.

"Wealth, under all governments and all institutions," continued Mr. Atherton, "must occupy a certain prominent position, and exercise a certain power; but it must not be permitted to conquer in its strife with mind. This is our danger; that talent, — I do not say genius, for that is generally disinterested, — but that talent will be supple and subservient to the mere momentary and unenlightened power of money. This would demean and degrade society, and eventually prove destructive to freedom. Money has not yet had this preëminence, except in the decline of states. Power and genius have generally had some common ties; and real, honest, well-won power is often genius, or has with it some near kindred."

"Do you think, father, the history of the world will sustain your view, in regard to monarchical governments, for example?"

"Perhaps not, in what are styled legitimate monarchies,

especially in modern times. But do you suppose that 'mighty men, which were of old, men of renown,' were mere brutal men of force? Far from it; they had mind often, and therefore knew its value and respected its possessors; but money! its possession does not necessarily argue either wit or worth. We are a nation of merchants and tradesmen; and there is danger lest things of higher value than mere wealth lose their just estimation."

"I wish, sir, that some of the Flyters of society could hear your remarks."

"I fear it would prove of little service to them. But what I wish to enforce, my son, is this, — that, if anybody is to be at the top, I am in favor of intellectual superiority. Aristocracy, if we are to have one, for mercy's sake, let it be an aristocracy of talent, not of ignorance. If we are to be trodden upon, let it be by men of sense, not by fools. In the first place, we get for our rulers and superiors those who know the most, which entitles them to our respect; and, in the next place, those who know the most will generally rule the best, and bear all their honors the most graciously."

"Happily, sir, our laws protect us from any permanent aristocracy of wealth, by providing for its distribution."

"Yes, our forefathers wisely took care of that; but then, the more transitory an aristocracy is, it is only the more offensive and unendurable. Indeed, nothing strikes me as more absurd and ridiculous, than pretensions of this sort, founded on mere wealth. For riches, as we know, are often obtained by the most dishonest means; and as often are employed for purposes of baneful luxury, and vain frivolity, and empty show. Their possession surely implies no necessary merit. Quite as often now as beforetime, instead of to men of understanding, they seem to be

'Given to the fool, the mad, the vain, the evil.'"

"There seems to be little opportunity for a regular aris-

ocracy amongst us, sir," said George; "and I suppose you would not, as a republican, countenance pride of family."

"I should countenance no sort of pride, my son, that is false. We are in little danger of pride amongst us, from this source; but, so far as it goes, it may be good, if founded on merit and maintained on the same principle. It is nothing, truly, or worse than nothing, to you, or to me, individually, that our ancestors may have been illustrious, through a long line of generations, unless we are also animated by their spirit, and dignified by a correspondent desert. But to a noble mind, the fact that they have been thus distinguished is a pledge to posterity, of public honor, and an earnest of generous service; and he is less likely to prove a coward or a slave, whose ancestors stood manfully forward for the principles of enlightened freedom, or — to quote one of your favorites, young ladies — who

‘Wrapped his colors round his breast,’

on the field of his country's fame.

"I can conceive how a consciousness of claims and motives such as these may foster a generous pride, and tend to inspire those qualities which honor the man, while they serve and ennoble the nation; instead of those meaner motives, beginning and ending, like the struggles of Plutus at his hoard."

And thus discoursing, they reached Eastford, — "dear Eastford," the girls called it, as the carriage rolled through the deserted evening streets, under the softest summer moon, towards their quiet and happy home.

CHAPTER XXI.

“ Summum crede nefas animam præferre pudori
Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.”

JUV. “ Sat.”

“ Mais ferme dans ma route et vrai dans mes discours
Tel je fus, — tel je suis, — tel je serais toujours.”

ANON.

ON the very next morning, soon after office-hours began, George Atherton might have been seen sitting, with the first volume of Blackstone's Commentaries open before him, in the law-office of Henry May, Esquire, of Eastford. For, having previously resolved, with the advice and consent of his father, upon the study and pursuit of the honorable profession of the law, there existed no reason for any loss of time; and these gentlemen came of a stock, which was in the habit of wasting none of that valuable commodity in useless delays.

Mr. May was himself a lawyer of the old school; that is, he brought the full powers of a strong and clear mind to the investigation of those principles which lie at the foundation of civil society, and whose practical application to the daily business of men makes law eminently one of the liberal professions. This great and valuable science, calculated in its purity to elucidate and maintain the higher principles and purposes of life, had scarcely begun to show symptoms of what many persons consider modern degeneracy in its practice. An eminent lawyer of those times would be, of course, not only a person of competent learning in his profession, at least, but also a man of honor and elevated notions; and the

necessities of his position, if not his own inclination, often made him really a statesman of the old, generous stamp. No doubt pettifoggers then existed, and, in that day as in our own, often had eminent success. Mere mercenary characters of this description have always flourished, and helped to degrade all professions. Medicine has had its quacks; there have been hirelings amongst the clergy, and sharpers in trade. These, we will hope, are the excrescences of human nature. Although the profession of law certainly affords frequent opportunities to one so disposed — and so of all other occupations — to be a villain; on the other hand, it offers far higher inducements to him to be an honest man. At the time of which we write, a reputation of the latter character was certainly necessary, in order to secure signal success in this pursuit.

Mr. May was honest, by nature and inclination, as it were; that is, dishonest practices were absolutely repulsive to him, and his mind was never disturbed by those conflicts, which many persons undergo, in deciding between the right and the wrong. He was, therefore, the soul of honor; was truly genial in his feelings, and social in his intercourse with the world. His practice was enlarged and as important as it could be, resulting from so small a place as Eastford, with its surrounding country; but he was often retained as an advocate in causes of consequence arising in other parts of his county. With all this, his reading was varied and extensive, beyond the line of his profession, and it was this, no doubt, which aided the natural operation of his mind, in the exercise of that power of illustration, which so often charmed a listening court and jury.

It will be seen, therefore, that Mr. May was not a mere case-lawyer. Indeed, on this subject he entertained very decided opinions; to wit, that exclusive attention to subtle points of law, often not easily distinguishable from each other, necessarily tended to narrow the mind; and that a liberal pro-

fession can be maintained in its proper condition, only by liberal professors, which those cannot be, who are always groping in the dark. While he counselled Atherton, therefore, to devote a just portion of his time — “*sex horas*” — as we believe, steadily to legal reading, he encouraged, rather than restrained, the natural inclination of that young gentleman to give another portion of the day or evening to general studies, of a nature calculated to raise and enlarge, rather than to contract and enfeeble, his mind.

“My notions, my dear boy!” he once observed, — for the familiarity between his own household and Mr. Atherton had made this appellation common with him, — “my notions on this subject are not perhaps generally entertained. Yet I think you will find that really great men, of whatever profession, and especially of our own, are more or less imbued with literature. Your mere practical and unideal lawyer professes, that a taste for such pursuits unfits a man for the business of life. It did not unfit Mansfield. You remember what Pope says,

‘How sweet an Ovid was in Murray lost!’

So it was with Blackstone; even Coke himself takes a good deal of pains to quote the poets. And I rather think you will find the difference between lawyers, who are remembered after they are dead and those who are not, is, that the first class possessed literature as well, and the latter only law.”

“I see no reason, sir,” said George, “why one may not be a good lawyer, even if he does exhibit some accomplishments of mind and manners.”

“Prejudices prevail upon this subject at present, no doubt,” said Mr. May, “which are really injurious to the best interests of the profession, and consequently to those of the public. The object of both should be to keep up the standard of professional pursuits. It is strange, too, there should be such an idea prevalent, that a man of refined tastes cannot be a good lawyer. I resent it as an insult to our profession. It

must have been got up by some of the dullest of them. And yet I never knew a fellow of this description, who did not seize every opportunity to make dismal attempts at figurative illustration. Of their success the least said the better."

"Mr. Cobbleston was in, this morning, sir, to speak to you about the flowage case you are to argue together next week. He sat down and chatted with me a good deal about law, and talked rather discouragingly."

"Indeed! what did Cobbleston say about it?"

"O, he said it was a very crowded and laborious profession, and complained very much of hard work."

"Upon my word, that is a joke! Everybody must work in this country upon something or other. But I am surprised that he is dissatisfied. Why should he complain of work? He would be utterly wretched, if he were taken off from his mill-horse track. He has no capacity for enjoyment. The beauty of the world might as well not exist, so far as he is concerned. Why, he is fit for nothing but work; he has hands and feet, and a dull sort of brain, and, putting all these into dreary exercise, he makes some progress in a circle, and is a very useful member of society,—especially for himself."

"Then, sir, you think he would be out of place in the enjoyment of gentlemanly leisure?"

"He! he would be out of place in anything but routine; there he's excellent. But the man has no mind; he is a sort of machine, that was wound up by somebody to its pitch, and so keeps going. Why should he claim pity for the absence of pleasures he could never enjoy? Hang him, let him work! In the mean time, I have accepted an invitation for both of us to take a run with your father's family down to the beach this afternoon. The fact is, my dear boy, we don't have half as much systematic play in this country as we need; and that's one reason people's heads are so full of nonsense."

"I have always thought," said George, "that your ideas of life were rational, as they certainly are agreeable, and

were true to the nature, which I believe Providence meant should be a source of enjoyment to us."

"I hope so. I enjoy life rationally, I trust; — it is necessary for me, and best for all, to be employed for some useful purpose, and up to a certain point. But I endeavor to take cheerful views of life. I have fair health; and merely to breathe a fine atmosphere, and to be abroad in the midst of charming scenery, instead of giving me, as somebody says, — Wordsworth is it? — yes, Wordsworth, —

‘ Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,’

is to me really a luxury, a sincere pleasure, a positive, substantial enjoyment. And now, have you copied out my brief in the flowage case, and looked over the authorities? Very well; there are some nice points in it. There’s another of these poets, — whose words get into my head, though I cannot always remember who they are, — who says something to the point we were speaking of just now, —

‘ Work at morn, and rest at noon,
And sleep beneath the sacred moon.’”

“There is another very high poetical authority, Mr. May, which says,

‘ What hath night to do with sleep?’”

“Ah, who is that? — it sounds familiar.”

“Milton, sir.”

“Milton, indeed! where is the passage? — not in his own person, certainly. His mind was too staid and well-balanced for that, unless in some very fervid mood.”

“No, sir; he puts it into the mouth of Comus.”

“O, you might as well quote me the argument of counsel, instead of the reliable judicial decision! This was the opinion of Comus, not of Milton, who was a person of regular habits; while the Signior Comus, I take it, was not a very reputable character.”

It will be seen, therefore, that Mr. May's ideas were a little out of the common course; and no doubt his residence at a place like Eastford afforded him a better opportunity for the indulgence of his habits of life and modes of thought, than might have been possible, had he been chained down to the engrossing duties of full professional practice in the city. At all events, he found more satisfaction in the position, in which he chose to remain. But it must not be inferred from this, that he had not an extensive acquaintance with men, or was not a shrewd observer of their various capacities and characteristics. Indeed, we are very much inclined to doubt, if a continuous residence in the city, amidst the whirl and hurry of its constant occupations, tends quite as much to the enlargement of the mind and improvement of the judgment, as the means of calm reflection, enjoyed in that suggestive repose, which whispers wisdom to the heart, amidst more quiet scenes. His opinion, therefore, is entitled to weight, in regard to an eminent jurist, of whom his young student had expressed a very strong admiration, after one of his casual visits to the city.

"I think you are mistaken in your estimate of his real character," said Mr. May; "to me, who have often observed him, this gentleman seems not even a great lawyer, far less a great man. To be either, one must have something more than mere external training; there must be inner, vital force; and when great men say they owe everything to industry, — I mean, in any walk of life, — they do not mean, that labor could make that man a genius whom nature intended only for a dolt; but that the operation of the combined causes has brought about the wonderful but natural result.

"Now this person, nature gifted with only a fair allowance of her intellectual stores, — a mind of a limited capacity, fitted to analyze, not to create; able, perhaps, to convince, but of no service to persuade. Such a mind has a memory for facts, a power to apply principles, the ability to collect and classify

learning, a respectable degree of judgment, a solid show of reason. It has exhibited the same characteristics, in the same degree, for a series of years; and would continue to do so forever, if forever were granted for the exercise of its faculties. But it is not imbued with letters, or enlarged by science, or ennobled by philosophy. It could not be; it has no breadth, no grasp, no far-reaching conceptions, no power to see at a glance, or gather up, as in the hand, the multiplied and infinite relations of things; and, though respectable, useful, honorable, valuable, is not, therefore, great."

"I believe he is very learned, sir, is he not? And holds a high professional rank, in the common judgment of the world?"

"Yes, he is learned in the books; but the world, George, does not see very deeply, and is not a very accurate judge of the character of cotemporaries. But the real defect of this gentleman is, that he really has no instincts. He thinks, not knows; and he thinks well enough within his range; but he lives in a world of his own. In a word, he is artificial, rather than natural, and has every sense but common sense."

"What shall I say to Mr. Cobbleston, if he comes in again, when you are absent, sir?"

"O, tell him I'll be ready! How many times has he been in about this case? I'm sure I don't know. There's another man! the most teasing fellow at the most malapropos times. He gets one idea, or a glimpse of one, into his head, and he can't rest till he works it up into something monstrous. It's an actual misfortune to be engaged in a cause with him. He is like the Irish candy-woman, to whom I once unadvisedly presented some small coin,—for I never take such wares,—and who appears daily and duly at my door ever since, without the slightest further encouragement, on my part, until her presence has become a nuisance, which ought to be abated."

“ I believe he is not eminently successful, sir, in bringing a great deal to pass, for all his hard work.”

“ No, indeed ! — he is fussy rather than effective. In fact, I do not know a person who is more efficient in constantly and laboriously doing what, half the time, really amounts to just nothing at all ! ”

It was in the midst of his agreeable relations with such an instructor, occupied with a good deal of hard reading and not a little hard work, that the months, and, perhaps, we may as well at once say, the years of George Atherton, slipped by. This mode of life was pleasantly diversified by such social entertainments as Eastford occasionally afforded, — by visits to “ the Farms,” with which many of his boyish associations were connected ; by jaunts to the beach, which had been the scene of that early adventure of his father, and whose consequences had colored, more or less, the subsequent life of both ; in strolls, of very frequent occurrence, to Miss Dudley’s hospitable door, and in occasional excursions, with the many charming young ladies of Eastford, to those various points of interesting natural scenery, for which the neighborhood of the old town has always been considered remarkable.

Whenever these parties to the rambles became of a more miscellaneous character, than was often the case, they were usually attended by another student of Mr. May’s, older than Atherton, and holding very different relations to the society, which both of them, more or less, frequented. This was Mr. Cobstalk, the son of a pains-taking farmer in the neighborhood. This person had enjoyed those advantages of early education, which are obtained in the common schools, and, much to his worthy father’s dissatisfaction, had determined to devote his somewhat crude abilities to the pursuit of a profession, which demands sound training and thorough cultivation of the mind, for its successful and honorable practice. We are aware, that there are exceptions to this doctrine, in the

case of men of extraordinary powers ; but the rule, nevertheless, will be found generally correct.

The person of this young man was square, his head rather large, and his manners were marked by a certain native simplicity, entirely regardless of the aid of ornament. Indeed, there could be no doubt he was of nature's coarser grain, — rough, rude, loud, — and that nothing could avail to give him any essential polish. With the ladies, of course, he was no favorite ; but, as he was good-natured and obliging, in his ungainly way, those who were themselves good-natured, put up with whatever was uncouth and unformed in his general demeanor and conversation. Besides all this, he had a strong fund of native shrewdness, well calculated to serve him in some parts of practice, in the profession he had chosen.

With Mr. Cobstalk, Atherton got on extremely well. His own disposition was entirely good-humored, and mindful of what belonged to those who differed from himself in very essential particulars ; and, from habit and reflection, he was inclined to make the best of what could not be helped. While he did full justice, therefore, to Mr. Cobstalk's native sense, he endured, for the nonce, those qualities, or deficiencies, of his character, which rendered that gentleman rather *brusque* than really vulgar, which, of course, would have been intolerable. The young men chatted together, consequently, with great freedom, upon the subject of their mutual studies, and sometimes, perhaps, on topics of more general interest ; and it will be seen from this, that Atherton himself was not what a great modern novelist, originally, so far as we know, has denominated a *snob*. For a snob we take to be a person who, justly, has so little confidence in his own claims and titles to the position he occupies, that he is of necessity always on his guard, lest he should make some concession to another, unbecoming his pretensions, and dangerous to his importance ; while a gentleman yields naturally, and of course, a deference

to others, which may, or may not be actually deserved by the particular subject of this kind and Christian species of benevolence. On the other hand, snobbishness, — which is but another word for vanity and selfishness combined, — snobbishness, we say, which denies due respect to others, also eats up that self-respect, which is the pledge and guardian of virtue. In fact, the man, who justly estimates himself at some price, is also likely to be somewhat considerate towards the proper rights of others, and of the decencies and proprieties of life.

“Atherton,” said Cobstalk, one day, “I wish you’d give me the meaning of this passage, quoted from Coke’s Littleton, in the book I’m reading here; it looks curious, but I’ve no idea what it’s about.”

“Just read it, Mr. Cobstalk.”

“How particular you always are to put the handle to my name! Don’t know’s I can read it; however, I’ll try.”

The effort was unsuccessful.

“Your pronunciation of French,” said Atherton, laughing, “is rather ingenious than accurate;” for Mr. Cobstalk had read the crabbed passage as nearly in correspondence with the spelling as he could.”

“O, confound the lingo!” cried he; “I never could learn to speak a word of it. I can read it only a very little, when it’s ever so plain; but this seems to me a mighty odd-looking sort of a sentence. Here, just take the book and read it yourself.”

Atherton read — “*Et il semble, que cest parole (hotch-pot) est en English a pudding; car en tiel pudding n’est communement mise un chose tantsolement, mes un chose ovesque auters choses ensemble. Et pur ceo il covient en tiel case de mitter les terres dones en frankmariage ovesque les auters terres en hotch-pot, si le baron et la femme voilent aver aucun part en les auters terres.*”

And Atherton explained to Cobstalk the interesting and excellent doctrine of *hotch-pot*.

“Atherton, I wish I knew as much as you do.”

“Your ambition is rather limited.”

“No ; I suppose I shall make a good practising lawyer enough ; but I have to puzzle away over things that you get hold of so easily ! But, I ’ll tell you one thing, I think you ’re too honest for a lawyer.”

“Indeed ! Do you think people object to honesty in the agents they employ ?”

“Why, they may think much better of you personally for being honest, for this they can’t help ; but whether those, who mostly employ lawyers, will be more likely to seek you on that account, is what I doubt. The men of the world, of course, want you to be honest towards themselves ; but when they have their own objects to gain of their adversaries, that’s another affair. I guess they like pretty sharp fellows then.”

“Then you think, that unbending integrity is rather an obstacle to than a qualification for success ?”

“I believe it ’s often so ; and then you *seem* just as honest as you are ; you might conceal it a little to advantage.”

“Ha, ha, ha ! Cobstalk, that is really an original idea.”

“I guess you ’ll find it correct. I think it is better to seem a little politic, even if you are not so.”

“I think it will be hardly worth while for me to make too strenuous efforts to conceal my virtues ; but, on the whole, let matters take their course, and still seem ‘indifferent honest,’ as you say I am.”

“But don’t you think, yourself, the want of more caution may impede your success ?”

“I think a manly course more likely to secure eventual success, of every kind worth striving for, or of any value when obtained. If not, it leaves me, at least, as honest as I started ; and that is a good capital on which to leave this world, or to begin another with.”

“But is it not necessary to conform, in some measure, to the judgment of the world ? which is harsh and hard, I grant

you, but still is not over-ready to believe any one better than itself, and perhaps thinks worse of him, if he appears so."

"There may be something in this; yet I have not so poor an opinion of the world as you entertain. What you call its harsh judgment, as to character, is often only its ignorant judgment. The world certainly is no better than it should be; but then it sees only a little way, if any, below the surface, and takes even this superficial view through spectacles, shaded according to the fancy or disposition of the looker-on, — as, green, for instance, blue, yellow, gray, and, we will hope, most generally, white."

"How does it happen, then, I should like to know, that rogues and knaves are so often successful, in our profession, as well as every other?"

"O, it is only the great rogues who succeed, as you call it, and they do it by dint of superior talent; the smaller fry are generally caught. I have often thought the reason why rogues are so frequently detected is, that, fortunately, they are generally deficient in real ability. To contrive a plot in crime requires genius, the same as to contrive a novel or a play; and your dull fellow, who attempts to do either, is detected by his inefficiency and the want of congruity of parts. There will always be something wanting, something deficient or ill-contrived in the scheme, which saves society by securing the detection of its enemy."

"I never thought of that before! Why, we generally call knaves *sharpers*."

"You may rely upon it, however, that true talent is generally on the side of virtue; a bad man is, after all, a foolish one."

We trust it will be seen, from what we have said in this chapter, that Mr. May's office was a fine school for these young men. It was of him, indeed, that the Rev. Mr. Ather-ton once wrote to a gentleman, who sought his advice in regard to placing his son under the tuition of that eminent

lawyer. After enlarging somewhat upon his professional and personal character, he concluded by saying —

“I esteem him, therefore, my dear sir, most highly, because he is really superior. His character is noble by the gift of nature. His soul revolts at what is mean, in thought and feeling and action. He cannot do a dishonorable thing. His heart beats to true instincts, and his mind responds only to what is right. And he may be safely confided in, at all times and under all circumstances, in secret as well as in the open gaze of men ; because the sources of his character spring from within, and his conduct acknowledges no responsibilities, but those which are real, absolute, and worthy his consideration.”

CHAPTER XXII.

“ Je l'aime, parceque c'est lui.”

ANON.

—— “ the pure, open, prosperous love,
That, pledged on earth, and sealed above,
Grows in the world's approving eyes,
In friendship's smile and home's caress,
Collecting all the heart's sweet ties
Into one knot of happiness.”

MOORE.

IN the mean time, Master Edward Shirland had certainly made his promised visit to Eastford. His visit, did we say? By'r Lady, a handsome series of visits; indeed, frequent enough to cause, and perhaps warrant, the various remarks on this subject, circulated by those, who speak and hear of such things. His pretence, of course, was, the wish to see his old college chum and friend, or a boating-jaunt down the pleasant river, or a quiet drive through the interesting country in the neighborhood of Eastford, or “any other reason why,” except the true one; which, in his secret heart, was, that he was deeply enamored of the sweet and innocent charms of Alice Atherton.

In fact, young Mr. Shirland, — we are loth to avow it, since his quality has become obsolete in that sharp encounter of money-mingling wits, which makes modern matches; wherein Love surely suffers no profanation, because his divine presence is not introduced to the company, — Mr. Shirland, we say, was really a modest man, in regard to his own pre-

tensions ; and, from the first moment he had fixed his eyes upon the lovely face of Alice, in the meeting-house at Cam-borough, she had seemed to his imagination a being created above the ordinary exigences of this world, and almost too pure to be invited to intercourse with its earthly and meaner pursuits.

We confess ourselves unable to settle this question satisfactorily, whether such a state of mind is, on the whole, favorable to the progress of successful passion. On this interesting point authorities and experiences differ. The knight-in-arms of authentic romance converted the mistress of his worship into an absolute idol. For her he gladly sacrificed his all ; for her he did much desperate battle ; for her he underwent weary vigils, toilsome pilgrimages, heavy labors, many, many painful days, and many longsome, restless nights ; blanching his cheek, wasting his frame, spending his heart — his blood — his life — repaid by an occasional smile ; and after this severe discipline, obtaining, as a general rule, the consummation of his heart's dearest wishes.

And truly, in our opinion, some of these ladies, as described, deserved it all, and were worthy of this homage — worthy of the seven years' service for Leah, and the twice seven years' for Rachel ; each worthy to be the "mother of thousands of millions," and that her "seed should possess the gate of those who hate them."

On the other hand, an authority of great weight and learning (so reputed) in these matters, pronounces a different opinion ; this is Lord Byron :

" Little he kens, I ween, of woman's breast,
 Who thinks that wanton thing is won by sighs :
 What careth she for hearts, when once possest ?
 Do proper homage to thine idol's eyes, —
 But not too humbly, or she will despise
 Thee and thy suit, though told in moving tropes ;
 Disguise even tenderness, if thou art wise ;
 Brisk confidence still best with woman copes ;

Pique her and soothe in turns, soon passion crowns thy hopes."

And, in regard to ladies of this ungrateful and frivolous character, we should have no doubt that the least said to them the better, and should fully agree with the further opinion of the same learned and eminent authority, —

“ When all is won that all desire to woo,
The paltry prize is hardly worth the cost.”

But upon one point we are well assured, namely, that fair ladies, who are worth having, are worth striving for, and, if necessary, worth waiting for ; and that — since from interested matches result coldness, indifference, neglect, eventual unhappiness, if not absolute hatred, and, most probably, degenerate and worthless offspring — love, and love alone, can form the basis of marriage, which answers its true intent ; and, in fact, that the reason why there are so few happy marriages is, that so many enter into that dear and holy relation from unworthy motives.

Think of this, we beseech you, ye pretty girls, whose cold-blooded fathers and mothers sometimes attempt to sell you, body and soul, for gold ; and look as sharply as your unsuspecting natures will permit ; for, although this will not seem the literal reading of the contract, yet, rely upon it, we have only too truly explained to you the actual construction of the marriage articles.

In the records of the County Court at Cambridge, under date of 1656, will be found an entry, in regard to a gentleman, who held rank in the civil and military affairs of the colony, of the following tenor, to wit :

“ Mr. — — —, of — — —, was admonished for marrying of himself contrary to law. He made confession, and stated, that *he misunderstood the grounds whereon he went.*”

We fear this is often the case, in our own times, even where people marry according to law.

But, whatever may be the speculations of our readers on these subjects, we have no hesitation in avowing our own con-

viſion, that the condition of love is the one delicious draught of this our mortal ſtate ; and that, however trying this experience often may be, it affords more valuable compensations than are the property of any other paſſion or purſuit. For, in true love, after all, there is ſomething truly elevating, and which only a perſon of noble mind can fully feel or appreciate ; and, to have even felt

“ The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
The exalted portion of the pain,”—

to be capable of experiencing all this, in its depth and breadth, and not to be altogether conquered by it, ſhows a ſoul of ſome power and generous aſpiration, indicating an immortal nature, and is of itſelf worth living for in this breathing world.

But if Edward Shirland was mo-deſt, Alice Atherton, on her part, was timid ; and it is obvious that mental qualities of this nature might long keep young hearts from any very cloſe communion. Of courſe, Shirland felt rather than ſpeculated upon his own emotions, and of courſe Alice could not but be aware of Shirland’s preference ; but ſtill matters went on much as uſual, from month to month, and really remained in a rather indefinite condition.

Whatever might have been the private conferences, if any, of the parents of this young lady, upon the topic ſuggeſted, they never tranſpired ; and to her certainly nothing was ſaid by them. Indeed, the freedom maintained in that excellent family, between the young and thoſe of mature years, preſerved itſelf within the bounds of a natural delicacy ; and as the queſtion had ſcarcely yet preſented itſelf in a tangible ſhape, no obtruiſive comments were made. Still, the devotion of Shirland was ſo conſtant, that its purpoſe could not eſcape their obſervation ; but it was one of thoſe caſes in which no objections could exiſt to the favorable iſſue of his ſuit, and it ſeemed beſt to leave it to take its own natural courſe. No doubt the ſteady, ſterling character of Edward Shirland, and

the sound good sense, exhibited by that young gentleman, would have sufficiently commended him to such unworldly people as Mr. and Mrs. Atherton, without the possession of the gifts of fortune; for they acted upon the principles of those doctors of wisdom, of whom Tacitus tells us, "*qui sola bona quæ honesta mala tantum quæ turpia; potentiam, nobilitatem, cæteraque extra animam neque bonis neque malis adnumerant.*" But, in fact, his temporal prospects were good. His father, a person of great intelligence and enterprise, was a substantial and prosperous manufacturer in the neighborhood of Oxton, anxious to see his son fairly settled in life; and, though his establishment was likely to commence in a cottage, it would probably turn out one of a somewhat *ornée* description.

"A picnic, — how delightful!" cried Alice, one morning, to her brother, who had come home to a rather late breakfast, and, imperiously summoning that young lady to his assistance, had announced, upon her entering the room, that a project was on foot for such an afternoon's entertainment. "But where will it be? — is there time to get it up? — who are going?"

"Question one, — it shall be at the Cliffs; two, — it is already got up; three, — everybody is only too glad to go. While you, madam, have been dallying over the morning, the work of invitation has been going on, and the wheels of the affair are already in motion."

"Have you seen Mary, Mr. Teaser?"

"Yes, and — Shirland," he replied, drawing her towards him, and kissing her cheek.

"I did not know — your friend — Mr. Shirland — was in town, George," said she, with a slight hesitation and apparent difficulty of articulation, the exertion of which, no doubt, it was, which caused a certain suffusion of color to rush to her face.

"No; how should you? He sent me over word from the

Wolfe House, where he arrived late last evening. I have seen him only this morning; but now I must attend to further arrangements; so, prepare yourself, young lady, with your 'cakes and ale.' "

" But how are we to go, Georgy dear ? "

" O, I shall drive you and Mary and Shirland in a wagon I have provided; the rest will choose their own modes of conveyance; and old Tillery is to come up with his boat in the afternoon, to take home such as prefer to go down in it with the evening tide; " and he sang —

" ' And with moonlight and lovelight
We 'll float o'er the billow. '

But come, Ally, my love, bustle round. I must be off to the Wolfe House forthwith, and meet our self-constituted committee of arrangements." •

Accordingly, he took his departure for that respectable inn, whose name, by the way, affords the most satisfactory evidence, in one respect at least, of the injustice of those charges of puritanical and strait-laced narrowness, which were sometimes brought against the worthy community of Eastford. For this ancient inn had been originally established by an old soldier of Wolfe's, who, with his Eastford compatriots amongst the New England forces, had marched under that valiant and victorious general through the wilds of Canada, — with them had surmounted "the formidable Heights of Abram," — and, more fortunate than his young and ever-glorious commander, had survived to see the British standard planted on the subjugated ramparts of Quebec. Upon his return from this conquering expedition, he had set up this hospitable establishment, and had hung out a conspicuous sign, intended to exhibit the living image of JA'S WOLFE, ESQ., in red coat and laced cocked hat; in which pictorial attempt the limner of the day, having no subject from which to copy, seeing the original

was "lapped in lead," had seen fit to represent the hero with a rather wolfish expression of feature.

During the civil troubles preceding the Revolution; through all the chances of that protracted conflict; amongst all the heated passions of the later war, — unaffected and unassailed by the bitter obloquy so often levelled at the government and aggressive spirit of our friends over the water, — the "counterfeit presentment" of JA'S WOLFE, ESQ., had still hung on high, for the long period of more than three quarters of a century, stained only by the weather, beaten only by the blast and driving rain; indeed, refreshed and renewed in color from time to time; gradually losing in this way a good deal of its primeval ferocity of expression, and probably any little relic of fidelity to the original it may have possessed; but glorious still in the red laced coat and sharply cocked hat, so terrible to the Frenchman of another day.

"A small thing," as Mr. Pepys might say; but yet significant of anything rather than a desperately illiberal condition of public and private feeling.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“ He who hath loved not, here would learn that lore,
And make his heart a spirit ; he who knows
That tender mystery, will love the more ;
For this is Love’s recess.”

CHILDE HAROLD.

“ O, Gioventu !
O, Primavera, gioventu dell’auno ;
O, Gioventu ! primavera della vita.”

THE Cliffs, in the mean time, began to present a truly animated spectacle. This place — the well-known scene of occasional pleasure-parties — was, perhaps, hardly entitled to an appellation even of such very liberal breadth of interpretation, but was rather an elevated bank of the broad river, which here swept between shores of far more than common loveliness. At certain points, the rocks did indeed descend precipitously to the indented shore beneath, leaving a considerable space between their foot and the common line of the tide. In other places, the ground fell towards the river by a gradual and gentle declivity. From this lofty bank, crowned with various descriptions of forest trees, and especially with several species of pine and fir, a noble prospect was afforded of the cultivated country on the opposite side of the river, and far up its ample and only partially winding stream. In the spring of the year, the thin and scattered soil, beneath the spreading pines and upon the surface of the rocks, would be clothed with that sweetest of our early harbingers of nature’s reöpening heart, — the lowly and lovely Mayflower. At this

season, however, the glades were profusely decorated with another more showy and really splendid favorite, which, under the general name of laurel, richly spread its brilliant and clustered blossoms over all the open spaces of the lofty bank. At this somewhat wild and uncultivated spot, it was the custom of the young people, upon occasions like the present, to gather as much as they chose of this beautiful shrub, which grew in no other neighboring place, but flourished here in inexhaustible supply ; and, adorning their horses and carriages with its branches, clothed in brightest flowers and leaves of shining green, thus to drive into the town, when the early twilight or later moonlit evening called them homewards from their pleasant summer excursions.

And now vehicle after vehicle, reasonably filled with smiling belles and gallant beaux of Eastford, dashed through the open gate, and across the smooth and level field, and, winding through circuitous paths beneath the arching trees, were discharged, one after another, of their fair and merry occupants.

The gentlemen, of course, tethered their panting steeds, wherever shade was afforded against the rather powerful summer sun.

The brief hours of a pleasant afternoon pass off too agreeably, to admit of a long and detailed description of their progress. Suffice it to say that, after general greetings had been interchanged, the party broke up into various groups, some of whom reclined in the shadow of the trees, or gathered the glittering laurel, or strolled upon the river-shore ; while those ladies who were of a more domestic turn, in due time, aided by the services of an effective committee of arrangements, spread the cloth upon the grass, beneath a grateful shade, and, as the sun descended, distributed thereupon a liberal supply of refreshments, provided by the joint stores of the assembled company.

Much of this arduous duty devolved upon our friend, George Atherton, as one of the chief originators, if not

entitled to the praise of planning the entire arrangements of the excursion ; and that young gentleman was admirably qualified to perform offices, even of this description, in a manner to make them peculiarly agreeable to all who were interested in the event. For he was not like some persons whom we have known, extremely efficient when there was nothing to be done ; but he really performed well whatever matter of business or pleasure he might have in hand, without saying much about it ; and he well understood that from the disregard of these things, which are often considered trifles, spring most of the inconveniences, and a very large proportion of the actual miseries, of life.

Indeed, a similar remark was made by Mr. Cobstalk himself, upon this very occasion, to a group of young people, amongst whom was our old acquaintance, Miss Lizzy Flyter ; who happened to be on a visit to some friends in Eastford, and, of course, had been invited, as a stranger, and well known to certain of the company, to participate in this festive scene. She was now attended by her persevering admirer and follower, Mr. Simeox, not yet established in his lady's grace.

"Now, just look at George Atherton, Miss Flyter," — which request, we may observe, was quite superfluous, — "he's quiet as a clock ; but he brings a mighty deal to pass. I never saw such a cool fellow, and so pleasant too. Truth is, he knows just how to take hold, and that's half the battle."

"Do you consider Mr. Atherton good-looking, Mr. Cobstalk ?" inquired Miss Flyter.

"Why, that depends on what you call good-looking. In the dark, you know, everybody looks black, — ha ! ha ! ha !"

"You seem to be amused, Mr. Cobstalk."

"Well, I really was laughing at a lady's asking such a question about such a handsome fellow as Atherton is. You must have finer-looking men in Oxtou than I ever saw, to compare with him at all."

"Is not your friend Atherton rather cold, Mr. Cobstalk, and even a little sour?" asked Mr. Simeox, who was lounging upon the grass, yawning drearily now and then, and who, apparently, did not fancy George much.

"Cold and sour! no, indeed. It is evident you're a stranger, and know nothing of him. When you come to know him well, he has one of the best and kindest natures in the world."

"I should not have thought so, sir," persisted Simeox, who did not seem to like hearing George praised. "I have been somewhat acquainted with him very long."

"Then, I'm sure, it's your own fault, and you might find yourself just about as well acquainted with him in a thousand years," said Cobstalk, with considerable spirit; for he did not submit to hear Atherton depreciated, with patience.

"You mean, I suppose," said Simeox, "he is not open with me."

"I mean you don't know how to open him."

"Perhaps, I should not think it worth my while to try. I don't like his high airs, I assure you, sir."

"Perhaps not; but, excuse me, Mr. Simeox, so dogs bay at the moon; but the moon goes on, shining just the same, and all they get for their pains is to be rather hoarse."

How this conversation between that elegant person, Mr. Simeox, and our plain-spoken and sturdy acquaintance, Mr. Cobstalk, might have terminated, we are unable to say. Miss Flyter evidently was highly gratified, and cast several approving glances at Cobstalk, who was too much engaged in the controversy for his friend to regard or even observe them. But Mary May, who had entered the circle in the midst of the discussion, interposed, like a true peacemaker as she was.

"I suppose, Mr. Simeox," said she, "that our friend, Mr. Cobstalk, who, by the way, I never suspected of moon-gazing, must have used his comparison only for the purpose of illus-

tration ; but I came to summon you all to the collation, where, I trust, your appetites will enable you to discuss things about which we can all agree."

In fact, the subject of the preceding conversation was now approaching the group, with the same hospitable purpose, which, of course, prevented any further allusion to the topic.

In the mean time, amongst the several parties, who had wandered away, through the deep groves and amidst a variety of picturesque and enchanting scenery, Alice and Shirland had become gradually separated from any companions, and had reached a very sweet spot upon the immediate shore of the river. A shallow but nearly semi-circular indentation of the bank rose here, with almost perpendicular cliffs, to a considerable height from the broad, rocky foundation at its base. Near the summit, however, the jagged rocks protruded, and along their upper edge, trees, inserting their roots into every crevice, and many interwoven, tangled shrubs, completely screened from observation those who sat upon the rocky floor below. This place was reached with no difficulty, from the strand by the verge of the river, whose shore at this point was somewhat bold, along which the stream, glancing and colored by the setting sun, swept with a smooth and rapid course. But never, certainly, were its bluest waters so lovely in their hue, as that transparent, deeper, bluer light, which looked from the eyes of Alice Atherton, now somewhat thoughtfully fastened upon the half-shadowed and incessant tide.

The eyes of Shirland, which, as we believe we have not before suggested, were quite dark, as in duty bound, followed the direction of those of his mistress. The young people sat for a considerable time, in the position we have indicated, without speaking. Indeed, real, honest, hearty love is not, in our opinion, voluble. Sincere love, we say, is apt to be silent. Its depths can scarcely be sounded, much less be ex-

pressed in fitting words, and all words seem really too mean for its purposes. Often and often, as we are given to understand, have lovers, upon occasions like the present, made a very blundering piece of work of it. And surely, if so renowned a warrior, as old John of Gaunt, stumbled and hesitated and stammered in an affair of this sort, as we are assured was the case by no less authority than Mr. Chaucer himself, and could only manage to get out the words, "Mercie, sweet!" what, we say, could be expected, in similar awful circumstances, of a mere civilian? Probably, however, Shirland argued, in the very agony of his tremors; like "time-honored Lancaster," upon the former occasion, that Heaven could not have formed a creature of such extraordinary beauty and bounty "withouten mercie;" and the time and opportunity and scene seemed all so apt to bring to an issue a matter which he had so long seriously considered, that, at length, he ventured, in rather tremulous tones, to remark,

"Miss Atherton, you seem pensive."

"If to be pensive is sadness," replied that lovely young lady, "I assure you I am not so."

"You are thoughtful, then, and I am glad your thoughts are pleasant. Will you not tell them to me, Miss Atherton, that I may enjoy them with you?"

"Perhaps I am thoughtful; yet I could scarcely define my thoughts; I was rather dreaming, I believe."

"Such dreams as yours must be always happy; would — would I might mingle in your dreams!"

Tears, certainly not of grief, were fast swelling in Alice's blue and downcast eyes.

"Do you, indeed, indeed, wish so? O, what shall I say?" and she trembled from head to foot.

"Yes, O, yes, Miss Atherton, — Alice, — let me call you! O, let me feel it, if I die of such happiness! O, to feel that I am in your thoughts, as you are in mine, dearest Alice!

this were happiness, hardly to be hoped for. Do not be agitated — let me sustain you.”

Her cheek flushed — her eyes were fixed upon the ground — her head sank upon her bosom — he caught her hand and clasped it to his breast — he drew her gently towards him, scarcely daring to believe in his own desperate hardihood, and imprinted on her virgin lips that first, glowing, passionate, holy kiss of young bewildering love.

It needed language no more. That one loving and gentle embrace — that one sweet, intoxicating draught of earth's supremest bliss — that sober certainty of mutual love, no more a dream, a doubt, a fear, a shadow, which might be dissipated, but sealed on earth and in heaven, immortal and extinguishable as immortality — so seemed to their young and faithful hearts the divine and rapturous all of life and hope and love, which each to each had thus trustingly given and received.

Of course, we have attempted, and, indeed, have only conceived it proper to give a mere outline of their discourse, which entered somewhat further into details, though broken and disjointed, as, arm in arm, they slowly moved to rejoin their party; which it was high time they were doing, since the sun had now fairly descended beneath the horizon. Fortunately, they had not lingered behind alone, but encountered various returning groups, by the way, so that they attracted no very special observation, when they seated themselves, with the others, around the grassy table. Mary, it is true, glanced at Alice, and George looked a little shrewdly at both his sister and Shirland; but it so happened that the eyes of both those young persons were steadfastly fixed upon the repast spread before them, and gave no conscious sign. Alice urged a slight headache, which, we have no doubt, was real, by reason of the agitating scene she had undergone, to account for her want of appetite; but Shirland was absolutely in hilarious spirits, and raised a great laugh against himself,

by spreading a liberal supply of mustard upon a slice of bread, which one of his fair neighbors had held out to him, in rustic fashion, for a piece of butter. Much cheerful conversation, but not of a kind to interest the public, enlivened the entertainment. All pronounced the picnic delightful, and unanimous thanks, of which the motion was put by Mr. Cobstalk, were voted to the spirited and skilful managers. All, however, were somewhat weary with the long rambles of the afternoon, which had now declined to early twilight; and, after a lively song or two, and, finally, "Auld Lang Syne," proposed on the score that everybody could join in the chorus, their serious preparations for departure were soon completed.

And thus, with harness and carriage festooned with flowers, and merrily singing along the country road, the various parties wended their way towards home. George had yielded his wagon to Shirland, who was to drive Alice; but in that particular vehicle no singing, as we believe, took place. Atherton had invited Mary to accompany him and others down the river in old Tillery's pleasure-boat. They, too, had pleasant song, floating across the water and echoing between the river's banks, beneath the summer moon, as, with scarcely swelling sails, their boat was wafted by the ebbing tide along its rapid stream. Miss Flyter and Simeox also went by the boat, and that lady contributed much to the interest of the musical performances, in which she excelled. There was no doubt the entire company had found the excursion agreeable, and two hearts it had certainly made supremely happy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ Ask me no more ; thy fate and mine are sealed ;
I strove against the stream, and strove in vain ;
Let the great river take me to the main ;
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield.
Ask me no more.”

TENNYSON.

“ We do that in our zeal
Our calmer moments are afraid to answer.”

SHAKSPEARE.

WE should be loth to undertake a description of Shirland's sensations that evening, as he walked, or, perhaps we should say, metaphorically, floated to his lodgings, after having left Alice at her father's door, and disposed of the vehicle which brought them from the cliffs. Those of our readers who have anything more within their breasts than that mechanical process of stony texture, often erroneously denominated “ heart,” — which is, in our opinion, in any true sense, something far more than a mere muscular appurtenance of the human system, — those we say, will be able to form some conception of a transcendental degree of happiness actually beyond weak human nature's powers of endurance, for any very considerable period of time. His heart beat ; his brain danced ; his senses were intoxicated ; in a word, he was in love !

Alice almost immediately sought her chamber. But, as she had no secrets from her mother, and Mrs. Atherton none from her husband, the actual state of the case was fairly understood by every member of that united family, at a rea-

sonable hour the next morning. Indeed, poor Alice, happy as she unquestionably was in the fulfilment of her own true wishes, and the gratification of her heart's dearest feelings, actually needed consolation and support, which only such a mother as Mrs. Atherton could afford; and, dearly as Alice loved Shirland, the idea of a future separation from those, who were so sacredly dear to each other as the members of her father's household, whenever it presented itself to her mind, came upon it like a shock almost too painful to be endured.

Domestic feelings, however, of this excellent description, nature gradually softens in the formation and progress of new relations; but in their very purity and intenseness they form the best of all foundations for the future peace and happiness of wedded love. The engagement of Shirland and Alice was fully sanctioned by the parents of that lovely girl, and his own family; and to all the numerous friends of the several parties it really seemed one of those matches which are sometimes said to be made in heaven. Her brother was highly gratified, of course, for his sister's sake, and that of his friend; and, indeed, the charming period of courtship seemed to be running very agreeably away.

We wish we were able to say as much, for the prosperous course of affairs between George Atherton and Mary May. It often happens, strangely enough, that those who, one would think, ought to fall deeply in love with each other, and to whom every opportunity occurs to bring this issue about, utterly fail in meeting the expectations of their judicious friends. Just as we think everything is going on as well as could be expected, something unforeseen and inopportune "doth lay siége to it;" or we learn, to our entire surprise, that those, for whom we had anticipated an unbounded store of mutual happiness, do not themselves enter into our plans at all. But, whatever might be the cause, matters remained much in the same condition as before, so far as Ath-

erton and Mary May were concerned. The intercourse of their families was so intimate, and they had grown up together in such very close relations, that, perhaps, after all, they seemed to each other more like brother and sister, than the subjects of any closer tie, to say nothing of the mysterious adventure at Indian Spring. Still, although there were young gentlemen, amongst the residents of Eastford, or those who occasionally returned to their native town as casual visitors, who would have given their eyes for one smile of favor from the bright and beautiful girl, they never got anything of the sort. In the routine of her avocations, the time passed almost as if there were no such existences as the ordinary young gentlemen of the world. She worked and often walked with her usual companions, and with them she frequently read, at Mrs. Atherton's or Aunt Sibyl's, quite as commonly as at home. Amongst these companions George Atherton is, of course, included ; but he had seemed very much devoted to his legal studies, and now engaged with earnestness in the duties of his profession, upon which he had recently entered, in connection with his instructor, Mr. May. Some persons pretended — and, we have remarked, that people are very observant in small places — that Mary seemed more than usually sober after the engagement of Alice. But could this have been anything more than mere fancy? — since this engagement certainly gave her unalloyed pleasure, and no change whatever had taken place in her own pursuits and relations.

We shall not deny, however, that the speculations we have suggested may have had some foundation in fact ; for, one evening, when Alice and her brother were sitting together, he deeply engaged in a book, and she apparently given up to revery, which threw a shade of thought over her open brow, she suddenly addressed him :

“ George, I wish to speak to you very much.”

“ Speak to me, Ally ? Why, that's really a great privi-

lege, which you need, of course, special permission to indulge in."

"No, — but something very particular."

"Indeed!" — laying down his book with great formality, and assuming an attitude of attention — "the permission is granted, fairest of messengers, who can bring no ill tidings. Yet, I think I will receive the communication in state. I will be a sultan, or, at least, a pacha, and you shall come as ambassador from some friendly or hostile power, — I don't know which, — or shall you approach as a suppliant? That, I think, is better. Speak, — I hear."

"O, I can't speak, dear, when you talk in that manner."

"To hear is to obey! No, that's what you ought to say. What wouldst thou, loveliest and humblest of suppliants?"

"O no; you only just confuse me. I never could say anything, when you put on this style. I declare, if you were talking to me so, I don't believe I could master force enough to say 'I'm innocent,' if you ordered me to execution."

"What is it, Ally, you have to say to me?" said he, taking her hand in his, and softly kissing the tips of her rosy fingers.

"Well, you know I wish to speak to you about Mary."

"No, I was not aware of the fact; but now I'm really serious; say on, Ally."

"Well, you know, George, that you have known Mary a good while."

"Yes, that is a fact certainly within my knowledge."

"Don't you think that — in fact — that you love her?"

"Love her! to be sure I do. How can you ask such a question? Who could help loving her? Everybody loves her."

"O, but you know what I mean!" blushing deeply.

"You are a very artful cross-questioner, Ally, qualified to wring the very soul of a perjured witness. What a lawyer you would make! Portia would be nothing to you."

“ O, Georgy, darling, I really feel the deepest interest in her happiness.”

“ Why, that’s what lovers say. I suppose you are so happy yourself, you foolish little thing, you want to put everybody else in the same condition. However, your experience of such matters is so great, after a few weeks’ engagement, that I suppose I must place myself under your tutorage.”

“ You are a real lawyer ; you just evade my question, George.”

“ No ; but to reply explicitly, Ally, you know the law is, and ” (sighing deeply) “ I fear must be, for a good while, my only mistress.”

“ George, I fear Mary is far from well.”

“ You do not seriously mean so, Ally ! What is the matter with her ? ”

“ Indeed, she often seems sad, for all her general good spirits.”

“ Sadness is an affection of the mind, not the body, — of the mental or moral, not of the physical nature.”

“ The body is affected by the mind. Indeed, her condition pains me. I do not know that you have ever talked to her of love, George ; but your intercourse has been one of affection, and I think you have not been with her so much of late, as formerly, and, I am sure, she suffers.”

“ Has Mary ever spoken to you on this subject, Ally ? ”

“ Never ! She is not one to make her griefs or sufferings common ; the inference is my own.”

“ You depreciate yourself, my sweet sister, to call such a confidence common. Mary is a noble — noble girl ! ”

“ Ah, now you speak of her as I like to have you.”

“ Do you suppose me a stock or a stone, Ally, that I could be insensible towards a girl like Mary May ? ”

“ No, darling, I know you could not but be just to her, and feel towards her as, indeed, she deserves ; but do you

not think yourself that you ought to be on more explicit terms with her, and that there ought to be no doubts or hesitations between you?"

"It is because I wish to be just, that I should avoid entangling her in my own unsettled prospects, even supposing I might have the presumption to ask her consent. I speak not so much of fortune; but, before making such declarations as you recommend, I feel that I ought to have some name and position, not entirely unworthy the acceptance of a girl like Mary May."

"In the mean time, you sacrifice the happiness of both. Is this wise? You may defer your happiness until it is too late. Better let her share your struggles, and help you to endure whatever is between you and the position I am sure you will obtain."

"O, wise young judge! What an advocate you are for love in a cottage, Ally!"

"I am an advocate for happiness, George, and I do not regard the silly sneers of the world on this subject. I believe there is generally more happiness in cottages than in palaces. Neither you nor Mary are given to mere fashion, or require fictions and frivolities for your comfort, and absolute poverty is certainly not your prospect."

"No, I trust not; but what an unworldly young lady you are, Ally! You deserve fortune; you regard it so contemptuously."

"I hope not to make my happiness depend upon things so very slippery, and which I have seen are so very unsatisfactory."

"I know not what would become of the world, if it were not for the generous spirit which often actuates your sex, Ally. It would become as brutal, as it is really unreflecting."

"A young gentleman who does us so much justice, deserves his fair reward; so take my kiss, darling, and do,

pray, see Mary to-morrow; and so good-night, my dear brother."

"Stop a moment, Ally, now; I have a question for you."

"Indeed! what is it, George?"

"You have been so plain with me, my dear sister, that I feel bound to be equally open with you. Now, let me tell you, I have had some reason to suppose, that Mary has received attentions of some serious character from another gentleman."

"Indeed! from whom? We have not so many beaux in Eastford that there could be much room for selection, I think."

"And yet this has been a very dark affair to me. Ah, Ally, you blush! You know to what I allude. Who was the mysterious stranger at Indian Spring?"

"Mr. Cobstalk, George."

"Cobstalk! impossible! I never suspected such a thing."

"It is true, nevertheless. Mary confided the interview to me, but of course not to be revealed; besides, she was afraid of being laughed at, and, I presume, especially by you. Of course, she had no suspicion of his purpose. Mr. Cobstalk had come over the fields to the spring, and the meeting was entirely accidental, at least on her part."

"Cobstalk! that is a joke! And to think I should not have recognized him, or had the least suspicion of the affair! Cob is a good fellow, and I like his plainness much; but to fancy him pretending love to Mary! Why, he has n't the slightest faculty of understanding such a girl. This is too presumptuous!"

"O, no! our sex like devotion, they say, from however humble a source. I dare say he fancied he loved her; but it was probably only a passing delusion of the imagination, and no doubt he has got over it long ago. Go see Mary to-morrow, Georgy dear, and now really good-night."

But, whatever might have been Atherton's determination

on this subject, and certainly his mind was now relieved from a burden which he had hardly acknowledged, a call of a professional nature, early the next day, seemed likely to occupy his attention during at least the morning hours. For he had scarcely arrived at his office, when an old fellow, whom he had long known by the name of Arey, and whom he had often seen on his drives to the beach, and elsewhere about the town, came in and demanded his services. This man was one of those persons, frequently to be met with in the neighborhood of seaport towns, who pick up a precarious living by performing a variety of odd jobs. In his early life he had been a sailor; but the evil habits, in which men of his class too often indulge, but less now, we would fain hope, than formerly, had prevented his ever getting what Yankees call "forehanded." As years advanced, he had been upon occasional fishing voyages, his "lay" decreasing as his activity diminished; and of later years he had sold lobsters and other fish from a wheelbarrow, about the streets, or found some such light employment as the charity or necessities of his neighbors induced them to require of him. With all this, the old man had a good deal of sturdiness as well as shrewdness of character, and if he did not maintain entire independence, it was not for want of setting up a fair show of pretension on that score. He was remarkable for an immense shock of long white hair, and usually appeared abroad in a light drab pea-jacket and a round-topped hat with a broad brim. He occupied a small house near the water, at some distance from the town; indeed, not far from the dwelling of our old acquaintance, Mr. Joslin,—who, by the way, never went to the Ohio. His daughter, a rather hard-favored single woman, herself in declining years, was the sole inmate of his house, and made honest and decent efforts to keep her vagrant father as comfortable as his nature and disposition would allow; for his habits, it must be confessed, were irregular, and inclining a good deal to vagabondism. Upon the

present occasion he appeared in his shirt-sleeves, carrying his coat upon his arm, and the white stubble, or rather crop, upon his face, was of at least a week's growth.

"Lawyer Atherton, this is, I believe," said he. "Squire, I want you to go over to Squire Barnard's, to defend me ag'in a complaint he's got ag'in me."

Mr. Atherton, of course, though the client was not one of singular promise, looked as grave as a young lawyer ought, and inquired into the nature of the accusation; at the same time expressing his surprise and regret, that a man so aged should be the subject of any criminal complaint whatever.

"Well, you see, squire, that an't neither here nor there; truth is, I've got a complaint afore the justice, so I must defend. Fact, don't hardly want no lawyer, if I wan't afraid o' bein' tripped up by some o' their plaguy lingo; so thinks, says I, it's best to be all ready, and I've heern an extreme good account of you, squire."

"Thank you, Mr. Arey; what is this complaint about?"

"Breaking Sunday, squire."

"Sabbath-breach! I'm really sorry to hear this of a person of your years, Mr. Arey."

"No matter; tell you they can't prove it."

"Ah, that's another affair, if you are not guilty! But how came such a complaint to be made, then?"

"That they must tell themselves, squire. I've got witnesses strong enough to day and date; there's our Peggy, and Mr. Joslin, and little Johnny Cheney, all over to court now; and they was all ready to go on, right away, when I came in arter you. Now, if you'll take up for me, squire, I'm an old man and don't want to be abused, and I could n't expect to get an old lawyer, Squire May, now, belike, and I thought I'd rather have you than any o' these 'ere young ones."

"Well, I suppose I must step over with you. You seem to have good testimony," said Atherton. "I'm quite flat-

tered by your marked preference, Mr. Arey ; and we can talk it over a little, as we go across the street."

Accordingly, Atherton and his client proceeded together towards the office of the justice, which was close at hand, and the old man informed his counsel, on the way, that the complaint, on which he had been arrested, was entered "out of spite," as he said, by one of his neighbors, and that he should have no difficulty in contradicting the whole matter, off-hand, by the testimony of sufficient witnesses.

Upon entering the office of the magistrate, who greeted the young lawyer with a cordial good-morning, though with much official dignity, he was also accosted by an excellent friend of his family, one of the deacons of his father's church — in fact, Deacon Seabright himself, a most worthy man, who resided upon his farm, in the immediate vicinity of Mr. Joslin's and of Arey's own house. He was surprised to learn from the deacon, that he was the complainant in this case, and the good man said, that he had made this accusation with much regret against old Arey, whom he often employed in light work ; but that really his habits of frequent drunkenness were such, and his neglect of religious ordinances, and especially a wilful disregard of the Sabbath, against constant remonstrance, had so grieved him, that there seemed no course left, but this public mode of correction.

Although Atherton certainly felt nervous about his case, being assured that the deacon was not a person to commence a groundless prosecution, or one "out of spite," or, indeed, to stir up any strife very willingly ; still, it was no time now to flinch from his aged client, disreputable as he seemed to be. All that remained for him, therefore, was to put the best face he could upon the cause he had undertaken, entirely out of compassion for a poor old man, who professed that he had been unjustly accused, and needed the assistance of counsel.

As the parties were all ready to proceed, the magistrate read the complaint to Arey, who seemed quite unconcerned,

and recorded his plea of "Not guilty." The complaint formally set forth, that the defendant, "at, &c., on, &c., the same being, then and there, the Lord's day, unlawfully did and performed certain labor, business and work, the same not being, then and there, works of necessity and charity, to wit, the labor, business, and work of fishing, in a certain river or stream, then and there known and called by the name of Mill River."

A second count set forth, that the defendant, at the same place and time, and under the same circumstances, unlawfully took part in a certain sport, to wit, the sport of fishing and angling, &c. &c. &c.

Deacon Seabright, who, it seemed, was the sole witness for the prosecution, having been duly sworn, gave in his testimony.

"I was really sorry," he began by saying, "to make a complaint against so old a man as Mr. Arey; but I've had occasion often to speak to him about his way of life, particularly his habit of drinking, so awful in a man of his years"—

"This complaint is for working on the Lord's day, deacon," said George.

"Yes, Mr. Atherton, for breaking Sabbath day. I do'no's there's anything really bad about him, 'xcept he will drink most always when he can get it, and never will go to meetin'."

"Mr. Seabright," interposed the magistrate, "you will please confine your testimony to the particular cause of complaint."

"Yes, your honor; I've often talked to Arey about his ways of going on"—

"This complaint, Deacon Seabright," said the justice, bringing down his spectacles, and lifting up the document, "is for working on the Lord's day, and sporting on the day aforesaid."

“Yes, your honor, I’m coming to that, right away. I talked to Arey about this ’ere, only a day or two before,—about the sin and the offence to the neighborhood, of his carryings on,—and all to no airthly purpose; and finally I told him, up and down, says I, ‘If I find you fishing in the stream ag’in of a Sabba’ day, I’ll certainly complain of you, that you may be sure of;’ so, as I was tackling up to go to meetin’, who should I see but Mr. Arey there, fishing away jest as if ’t was nothin’ but a week-day, and payin’ no more attention to what I said to him, than if I had n’t ’a said it. And I would n’t put up with it no longer; for it’s really too scandalous for a decent neighborhood to have such things a-goin’ on.”

“How far is your house from the place where you saw the defendant?” inquired Atherton.

“Not more’n a hundred rods; and then I saw him again, when I drove down the road, and that brought me considerable nearer to him.”

“Did you speak to him, deacon?”

“No, I did n’t; he was some ways off. I did n’t wish to holler to him, Sunday; besides ’t was n’t o’ no use, and I wanted to think o’ somethin’ else, goin’ to meetin’.”

“Are you sure it was last Sunday?”

“Could n’t, of course, be in any mistake about that,—it was no longer ago than day before yesterday, that ever was.”

“May you not have been mistaken in the person?”

“Could n’t be possible; if I know anybody, I know him; he had on his old dress, same he always wears; what he’s got on now,—could n’t possibly be any mistake; nobody else ever does fish there Sundays, and there he was standin’ in just the same place, stock still, as if he did it o’ purpose to rile me up, Sunday. I’ve seen him too often doin’ the same thing, right there, not to know who ’t was.”

“Part of your statement is inference, deacon. Are you willing to swear positively it was Arey, and no one else?”

“I am, and I do swear it was Arey I saw fishin’ there, day ’fore yesterday, with my own eyes.”

Old Arey nudged his daughter here, who sat by him, and winked at Atherton with rather a knowing look. These manifestations, however, seemed rather inopportune, and, indeed, the magistrate looked at Atherton, as he asked if he had anything to offer in defence, as if he presumed there could hardly exist testimony to meet a complaint so positively sustained. Atherton, however, rather tremulously called his witnesses. The first was the daughter of Arey, Miss Peggy, who testified positively, and with considerable decorum, that her father was not out of the house, from an early hour in the morning until afternoon of the day in question. The deacon threw up his eyes, and seemed horror-struck at such wilful perjury, as he, no doubt, conceived it to be. The next witness made it worse and worse. This was our acquaintance, Mr. Joslin, now quite advanced in years, who said that he went down to Mr. Arey’s that morning of Sunday, about nine o’clock. “I had the rheumatiz bad,” said he, “so I could n’t go to meetin’; and thinks, says I, ‘I may just as well step out a bit,’ and seein’ Arey’s door open, as I went down the lane, I went in, and staid chattin’ with him, well, nigh onto ’leven o’clock — at any rate, a good while after meetin’ time; and I can say for certain, he did n’t go out once all the time I was there; — and, now I think on’t, what seemed to me kind o’ strange, he had n’t on his old pea-jacket, no, nor his common hat neither; but I believe I thought them he had on was his Sunday clo’es.”

In reply to the justice, who inquired how he could be so positive about the time, he said that Arey asked him, as soon as he went in, and he looked at his watch, and so he did just before he left; besides, he heard the town bells ring for meeting. It came out, in the course of his further examina-

tion, though Mr. Joslin declared he had forgotten all about it at first, that Peggy Arey had gone over to his house, on the Sunday morning, and had asked him if he would step over and see her father, before meeting, as he was not very well. He now recollected the circumstance quite distinctly.

The final witness, who gave the finishing blow to Deacon Seabright's complaint, was "little Johnny Cheney," as old Arey called him, who testified, that he was coming up from the beach, on Sunday morning, and, seeing Mr. Arey, as he thought, standing on a rock in the stream fishing, he had gone across the fields to speak to him, and see what luck he had; "But when I got close up," said he, with a burst of laughter, which the respect due to the court hardly restrained, "what should I see but some sticks stuck up, and old Mr. Arey's pea-jacket on 'em, and his old hat on top o' that, and a fishing-pole tied to the whole, so's to make it look edzackly like him."

This narration brought the case to a speedy conclusion, amidst the inextinguishable laughter of the parties principally concerned, and of the hangers-on and large crowd of listeners, who had been attracted by the fame of such a hearing. George Atherton, however, felt it necessary to apologize to the magistrate for his part in the transaction, and assured him that he had been entirely unacquainted with the trick played upon Mr. Seabright, and with the nature of the testimony developed in the case, which he had been called upon so suddenly to manage. But old Arey did not, by any means, see the matter in this light. He had no idea of losing all the advantages of his cunning contrivance, and pressed so hard to turn the tables upon Mr. Seabright, by a complaint against him for perjury, that the good-natured and somewhat perplexed deacon was fain to pay him some trifling matter, by way of composition, though we really think counsel might have advised him, that no prosecution could actually be maintained against him under those circumstances.

As for George Atherton, himself the soul of honor, he was so provoked at the part he had been made to play in this transaction, by the cunning old vagabond, that he gave him a schooling so energetic, as may have been of more service to him than the milder expostulations of good Deacon Seabright, who probably looked sharper on another occasion.

CHAPTER XXV.

“ Alas ! mankind are unco weak,
And seldom to be trusted ;
If self the wavering balance shake,
It ’s rarely right adjusted.” BURNS.

“ Perdiccas said to Alexander, ‘ My lord, what do you reserve for yourself ? ’ He replied, ‘ Hope.’ ” — GOLDSMITH’S HISTORY.

THE transaction, which we have recorded in the preceding chapter, was the occasion of a good deal of comment. There were those who really thought the whole affair was contrived by Atherton, and who winked slyly, as they pronounced him a “ deuced shrewd fellow,” and made their minds up to seek his aid in their future difficulties ; while the public generally, and especially those who knew old Arey pretty well, did more justice to the honorable character of the young lawyer. His own immediate friends and family circle were quite entertained with the incident, and even Deacon Seabright admitted that the old rascal had shown a wit and skill in planning and carrying out a practical joke, worthy of a better cause and a more suitable day. And, although Master George was somewhat mortified and provoked at such a let-down to his theories of honorable ambition, yet, to him also, the ludicrous side of the question irresistibly presented itself. In either event, he hardly felt in a fit frame of mind, on that particular day, to make serious love ; though we should sincerely hope he would meet with nothing but generous sympathy certainly, from Mary, under any circumstances whatever.

On the following morning, a visitor of a different character from old Arey entered the law-office of Messrs. May and Atherton. This was our friend, Mr. Joslin, who seemed to have something on his mind, which he proceeded, after his own fashion, to unfold.

“I was wanting to see 'Squire May,” said he, taking the chair, which Atherton offered, “but, as he 's away, I s'pose I can tell 't you jest as well. Squire, old Arey, — he 's an onprincipled old dog, — he got off mighty well yesterday, — there, 't was a cur'ous sort o' scrape, all round. The deacon, he thought he 'd got him, sure enough; but there 's no catching sich a cunnin' old fox.”

“I hope you have had no difficulty with him, Mr. Joslin,” said Atherton.

“Not I! I know him too well for that; he lives close to me; our housen 's only a stone's throw, as 't were, away, and when I want him, I jest pays him, and there 's an eend on 't; he an't good for nothin', only small chores.”

“What is the matter, then, Mr. Joslin?”

“Wal, I think the lecter you give him yesterday did the old critter a mint o' good; brought him more round to his senses 'n ever I see him afore.”

“I 'm very happy indeed to hear it. How did he show it, Mr. Joslin?”

“Squire, you remember Miss May, Squire May's lady, was saved from the wreck down below our house, a good many years ago? — wust storm I ever see.”

“I hardly remember it, Mr. Joslin, as I was but two or three years old; still I am acquainted with the fact of course; but what has it to do with old Arey?”

“I was g'wine to tell you, — it 's very cur'ous; strange sort o' folks in this world of our'n, squire. Your father, he was down there that very day.”

“Yes, I have often heard the whole story talked over,

as you may suppose; not by my father, however, who seldom alludes to such matters."

"Do tell! Want to know! Miss May, she *was* a pooty creatur'. I remember all about it, jest as if 't was only yesterday, when she was brought up to our house. But, as I was g'wine to say, old Arey, he used to go down on to the beach, after the wreck,—he always was sort o' shoolin' round,—though I never had no idee he picked up anything of any account; but—there,—you can't tell nothin' about sich people."

"You surprise me very much, Mr. Joslin! Do you mean to say that Arey saved any property from that vessel?"

"Why, about property, I don't. I was g'wine to tell you. I'm kind o' cur'ous about papers myself, and always put 'em away careful, in the locker over my old woman's oven, out the way. Hows'ever, last night old Arey, he come into our 'us, and I was smokin' my pipe, and felt e'ena'most wore out,—for I'm gettin' to be an old man, Mr. Atherton, and I'd bin up to town and sort o' jobbed round all day,—and so down he sot, and seemed kind o' heavy, I thought. And he says, says he, 'That young Squire Atherton, he talked to me like a father;—why, Parson Atherton, that boy's own father,'—'xcuse me squire,—'could n't ha' talked better; and I'm afraid I *am* an old sinner.' And then he axed me if I knew whether or no deeds was good for anything after twenty years, in case they 're lost and then found again; and I told him I did n't know for sartin, and he'd better ax you, as you was his lawyer, or Squire May, and then he kind o' started;—but I did n't mistrust nothin'; and so he sot, and sot, and sot; and my wife she got tired o' waitin', and she got up and went and hapsed the fore-door, though 't an't often we do think to hapse it; and she told me I might open it ag'in, when folks was ready to go home, and so she kind o' flung off to bed. And arter she was gone, he begins to edge on to the old wrack story; and axed me if I knew whether

there was any law ag'in pickin' up papers, like, on the shore, when you did n't know for sartin where they come from, nor nothin' about the valley on 'em ; — and then I told him right out, ' You 've got somethin' that 's worried you, old fellow, and you 'd better out with it plump, and make your mind easy, first as last ; ' and so he said he had. And up he got and would n't say no more about it ; but he told me if I 'd go up to town and tell Squire May, he believed he 'd got somethin' that might be o' valley, though he did n't know, I might and welcome ; — and that 's the upshot o' the story, squire, as nigh as I can tell it."

" And a very extraordinary story it is, Mr. Joslin. Much obliged to you for coming up, though I am unable to make much of it, I confess ; nor have I any reason to believe this old fellow can have anything of consequence in his possession. Still, it may be so ; but, whether it turns out anything or not, I, and I am sure Mr. May, will feel extremely obliged to you for your trouble."

Mr. Joslin professed his pleasure at doing any kindness for " folks he liked so well," and took his departure with a hint, that with such people as old Arey, it was always " best to strike while the iron was hot ; " and he had scarcely left the door, when Mr. May himself entered the office. To him, Atherton at once related the main facts of Mr. Joslin's rather circumlocutory narration. He thought a moment.

" Papers ! " said he ; " there may be something in it. This Arey is an ignorant old dog, but crafty, as far as he knows. Such people often are. Did he say ' papers ' or ' deeds,' did I understand you ? "

" Both. He asked Mr. Joslin first, if a lost deed would be valid, if found after twenty years ; and then, in the subsequent conversation, spoke of finding papers."

" Right ; — there may be something in it, but doubtful, doubtful. There certainly were deeds amongst my effects in the vessel, of some probable value at that time, and possible

now. At all events, my dear boy, it's worth looking up, and as I am excessively engaged this morning, I'll be obliged, if you'll drive down to this old fellow's quarters, and see what you can make of him."

It was a very short time after this conversation, when Atherton drove up to the door of Arey's house, and found both him and his daughter at home. Upon his entering the room, in which they were sitting, the old man appeared much as usual, but Miss Peggy seemed a good deal distressed and agitated.

"I'm very glad you're come, Mr. Atherton," she said. "I've always tried to get an honest living, and do the best I could for father, though it's terrible hard for poor folks to get along. Rich folks don'no nothin' about it; and I've had to slave, and slave, and slave, and father don't always do as I want him to, — don't you say nothin', father, — but I want to have a good name, if I am poor. I an't got nothin' else; and father han't done right about these papers. If they an't worth nothin', they an't his'n; — but I did n't know he had any sich things in the house, not till yesterday, that ever was. And, O! you must consider, Mr. Atherton, he's a poor old man, and an't been so well taught as other folks has; and whatever else he is, he's always kind to me when he has his worst tantrums, and always did well by me, when he had anything to do with; and, after all, he's my father, and all the friends I've got in the world!" — and the poor woman wept bitterly.

Atherton did his best to soothe her, and old Arey went on to say:

"Now, Peggy, don't take on so, — 't an't o' no use. I don'no 's these papers" — and he took out an old pocket-book — "are reely worth anything; but they've gin me a good deal o' worry. I wan't to blame about gettin' 'em. I was down on the beach that day after the wrack, and see some fellows have hold o' something, and when I come up

towards 'em, they jest run away ; and the trunk had n't nothin' in it when I got up to it, and was battered all to pieces. And I see somethin' drop, and I followed on and picked up this little bundle, done up in a newspaper. And so I brought it home and dried it in the sun ; and, as nigh as I could make out, 't was deeds o' land. And I did n't know who the signer was, nor nothin' about it, and s'posed it belonged to some o' the drowned people ; — and I kept studyin' it over and over, and did n't know but I might get somethin' out on 't, if the owners was all lost ; till, finally, I heerd, into neighbor Joslin's, one day, that Miss May's father was named Bell, and then I meant to bring it up ; — and then I kept it on till I was most ashamed to, and I most forgot all about it, though it used to come up, sometimes ; till, when you talked to me so yesterday, squire, it kind o' flashed on me all 't once, what an old reprobate I was, to keep another man's honest rights away from him, that wan't o' no good to me either, — and I could n't stand it no longer ;” — and he handed Atherton the package.

Upon glancing hastily over its contents, amongst other papers, more or less defaced by exposure to the water, was evidently a deed entirely legible, though a good deal stained, duly executed by one Samuel Gammon, of Axeville, in the District of Maine, and, for a valuable consideration, conveying a considerable tract of land, — in fact, an entire township in — county, in said District of Maine, to Langdon Bell, of Colesville, in — county and State of Pennsylvania ; and another deed of the same land from Mr. Bell to his daughter Susan, of a subsequent date.

Atherton comforted Miss Peggy, with an assurance of perfect immunity from any of those consequences she dreaded for her father, and, taking a kind leave of both, made the best of his way to the office.

“ It is, in fact, the lost deeds, sir,” said he, handing the package to Mr. May.

“Indeed! Sure enough, sure enough!” said the cool and sharp senior, glancing over the instrument;—“this is indeed a marvellous recovery! The other deed is also here; but this requires consideration and examination. By the way, what did this old villain say about his possession of the documents?” And Atherton proceeded to explain the account which Arey had seen fit to give of the matter, not forgetting Peggy Arey’s distress.

“Yes, like enough,” said Mr. May; “poor woman! poor woman! We must do something for her, George. I dare say she helped the old fellow to his senses. These women are often angels to the worthless of our sex, George.”

“We have both been highly favored in our own relations with them, sir,” replied Atherton, modestly.

“Yes, indeed! God bless them! We’ll trust that we have given them little occasion to try the hard experiences of life. But I have known, often enough, in my professional experience, when nothing on earth, certainly, but some ill-used but true-hearted wife, or a daughter, or sister, or, above all, a mother’s untiring love, has stood between some wretch of a scape-grace and utter perdition. But about this deed,—let us see”—

“I suppose you have no knowledge, sir, of the value of the lands conveyed by it?”

“Not in the least. I only know, what we all know, that the timber-tracts in Maine are the subject of vast speculations now, and that many of them have increased amazingly in value. When this deed was passed to Mr. Bell, they were worth comparatively little, and a township could often be bought for little more than a nominal consideration, especially in the interior. What a pity he did not have his deed recorded, or enter upon the purchase by some agent, since he could not go down there in person! But I suppose he thought it hardly worth troubling himself about, at that time.”

“What do you think of the chance of making good your title, Mr. May?”

“Really, I am unable to say. The title is good, of course, against the grantor and his heirs; — and if it has not changed hands, which is hardly to be hoped, in these shifting times, I do not see but we stand well enough yet. I’ll tell you, George, I can’t be spared from home at present, — suppose you run down at once, and try your fortune in this adventure? It’s a pretty case, a very pretty case, — what say you, my boy?”

“I shall be most happy to do so. I have quite a desire to see something of Maine.”

“When can you get ready to go?”

“By the mail to-night.”

“Right; at midnight it starts. I like your spirit; and I shall leave the management of this business very much in your hands. In the mean time, I will put a few hints on paper for you, as they occur to me; and write you a letter to an old legal friend of mine, in Axeville, where I see this old Gammon lives, or lived, and where you’ll be in the very vortex of land speculations, and can learn something about the condition of the affair, if anywhere. Your first point, undoubtedly, will be to get this deed on record as soon as may be; because, then, you know, we shall have our evidence of seizin, running back to the time the deed was executed, unless there should prove to be a subsequent purchaser without notice. But in all these matters you can have no better counsel than my old friend, Rutledge.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

“ Alas, Love ! I would thou couldst as well defend thyself as thou canst offend others ! I would those on whom thou dost attend could either put thee away, or yield good reason why they keep thee ! ”

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

THE transition from love to law is often found more easy and natural than from law to love ; yet, singularly enough, at the instant this discussion of legal points was concluded, the mind of George Atherton reverted with peculiar tenderness to his charming friend, Miss Mary May. We pretend to no exclusive information on these points ; but this one circumstance we have frequently observed, — that people of opposite sexes, who have lived along, for considerable periods of time, on very agreeable and friendly terms, apparently without thinking of any more tender relation, all at once discover they feel a sincere affection, which they had not previously imagined, just as they are about to part from each other, and to lose the opportunity of indulging that gentle feeling, for which propinquity is supposed to afford the fairest advantages.

It is not strange, therefore, that, having made all necessary preparations for his journey, Atherton should have found himself, on the preceding evening, at the house of Mr. May. Indeed, as the evening was soft and moonlit, and the inviting air was loaded with the balm of flowers, he had strolled with Mary into the garden, and the two were soon seated in a rustic arbor, overrun with roses, which crowned a pretty knoll,

at some distance from the house. Alice, of course, had walked up with her brother, but had perversely insisted upon sitting within doors to keep Mrs. May company; that lady generally dreading exposure to the night air.

After continuing silent a considerable time, for people who generally had a good deal to say to each other, Atherton addressed his companion. Her eyes, in the mean while, had been steadfastly gazing on the full moon, apparently sailing through the heavens; now and then shadowed by thin, light clouds, which rapidly flitted over and scarcely veiled its bright and lovely face.

“I am about to leave you for a time, Mary,” said he, “and it makes me sad enough.”

“Yes, so my father has informed us; but not for a very long period, George.”

“It may be a week, or a fortnight, or even more; but, I assure you, it will seem very long to me.”

“O, you will have much to interest you! Besides your business, you will visit new scenes and enjoy new pleasures. How I should like to roam through those noble old woods, and feel the freshness of nature breathing upon me!”

“I know it is generally imagined, that those who remain behind feel the absence of friends more keenly than they who leave them; but, then, they have the routine of their daily occupations, and the ordinary current of their feelings, disturbed only by occasional remembrance of the absent; while he who parts must drag, often heavily enough,

— ‘a lengthening chain,’—

as Byron says.

‘At leaving even the most unpleasant people
And places, one keeps looking at the steeple.’”

“Yes, that is natural enough, certainly; still, it’s hardly worth while to indulge such melancholy feelings, when we expect to meet again so soon. I sincerely hope you will be

successful in this business, George, though I paid little attention to its merits."

"It may be of very considerable consequence to you, Mary, for your father has quite a stake in the result of the venture."

"Why, there 's nothing to lose, is there?"

"No; but there may be a great deal to gain."

"That I can better spare, — however, it was not on that account I spoke of it, but for your own sake."

"Indeed! why so? My interest in the business is, of course, entirely of a friendly nature."

"And yet, I think that success in something of consequence, something out of the common course of events, would tend to settle and satisfy your mind."

"I am really mortified, Mary, at your opinion of me. Do you indeed think me unsettled in disposition, or over-ambitious?"

"Not exactly so, my friend; perhaps, I did not choose the right language. I think your mind preys upon itself too much, and is restless and dissatisfied with present good, and looking constantly forward to something future and unknown."

"Indeed! you have looked at me rather closely. I had conceived myself to be more than usually composed; other friends have sometimes told me so."

"Your manners are quiet, but you are thoughtful and far-seeking; in a word, under a calm exterior, your mind seems to me active, and your temperament ardent."

"In one respect, Mary, you have rightly defined my qualities."

"How do you mean?"

"My feelings are ardent towards yourself."

"I do not doubt it, George; our friendship has been cordial and unbroken from our childhood," said Mary, looking down.

"You do me injustice, Mary, by giving so cold a name to my — my emotions."

“ I think not ; you must be careful not to do great injustice both to yourself and me, by calling our intimacy something which it does not deserve.”

“ I am pained beyond measure, dearest, dearest Mary,” replied Atherton, taking her unresisting hand, — “ my oldest, best and truest friend, — to find you cold, where I had hoped you would be — what shall I say ? — otherwise ! ”

“ And expected, I suppose, that I should be so at your bidding ? No, George, I shall take no high tone with you, — I honor and value you too much for that ; but do not expect me to say I love you, because the momentary pain of parting with friends has made you fancy your feelings warmer than they are. Such love as this does not satisfy the demands of my nature.”

“ O, Mary, how can I satisfy you that I dearly, fondly, truly love you ? ”

“ Not, certainly, by a momentary burst of passion. O, to be loved by one whom she can herself love in return, what would not a true-hearted woman give ? This is her life, her all ; without it she is nothing ; for it she would sacrifice, like dust, whatever the world holds most valuable, and yield all but her immortal hope ! I will not dishonor the privileges or character of my sex, without which they are neglected toys or trivial castaways. I cannot be satisfied with half a heart ! ”

If, in the thoughtless familiarity of daily intercourse, Atherton never felt it fully before, at least now this noble girl stood before him revealed in a character claiming and deserving the highest devotion of the truest and most manly heart. As her real value became apparent, the distance between them seemed sensibly to increase ; emotions scarcely defined before rushed in a mingled current upon his soul, — shame, at his previous coldness, — a sense of almost selfish neglect of a nature so noble in a person so lovely, — traitorous doubts, rising now that hope was essential to his happiness, —

some gleam of consciousness that she really loved him, and yet held him subject to her will, with a pride superior even to love itself,— and before him, the gloom of a lowering heaven, where he had fondly imagined the serenest smiles of only summer skies. This burning and soul-sickening flood of jarring thought and feeling met and struggled at his heart, and he flung himself at her feet, in a transport of shame, and agony, and love.

“O, Mary!” he cried; “I feel deeply, deeply, how unworthy I am of one whom I—senseless fool that I have been!—ought to have known so much better; but, O, if love, even you might value,— if the truest, most devoted affection”—

“Still, one thing might even then be wanting, George.”

“What is it? O, tell me what it is!”

“Mine in return. Our affections are not at our own disposal; our wills cannot, at our pleasure, bend our hearts. If you love me, as you now feel that you do, you would yourself despise me, if I yielded only to your entreaties what my own heart might refuse to ratify. I cannot fully confide in the love which grows up in a day, and has borne no test of time.”

“O, Mary! no time would be too long,— no condition too hard,— if you do not utterly drive me mad, by refusing hope in some future, however remote.”

“George, I will be frank with you. I trust and believe that you deserve this avowal now, however painful it may be to me, as well as to you. I might have loved you— perhaps I did, as a girl loves, when I thought you only waited for the time when you might honorably open your own heart to me. Since then, I have had struggles, which it were only vain to recall. Other objects seemed to fill your mind”—

“Not other persons, Mary,— do not believe that!”

“Perhaps not; but maidenly pride and modesty taught me to control, and, I thought, to conquer a girlish fancy, which

you disregarded. O, to endure again what I have suffered!" — and she held her hand to her heart.

"Mary, Mary, you are weeping! how can I bear to see your tears?"

"Let us go in, George; we have been absent too long."

"Say one word to me, dearest Mary, — say you are sorry to have me go!"

"Indeed, I am. I shall be most happy to see you return successful."

"Say one word to me more, — one kind word, sweetest, — do not, O, do not send me away wretched as I am now!"

"I will say 'good-night' to you, George, very kindly."

"Mary, Mary, I will, — I must believe you do not mean utterly to reject, — utterly to destroy me."

"You are too presumptuous. Beware how you deceive yourself. Good-night, George," giving him her hand, which he kissed passionately, again and again, under the impulse of some reviving hope.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“ A letter forged ! St. Jude to speed ! ”

MARMION.

“ All that gives gloss to sin, all gay,
Light folly past with youth away,
And rooted stood, in manhood's hour,
The weeds of vice, without their flower.”

ROKEBY.

UPON their way home that evening, her brother seemed so really out of sorts, that Alice, kind little thing that she was, made no allusion to his interview with Mary ; but, on the contrary, made a variety of those efforts, which seem so dismal to the subject, when in actual distress, to amuse him by conversation upon indifferent topics. The whole family, in the old homely fashion, remained up to see him off ; and through suffering under a complication of uncomfortable feelings, probably as trying as any which the human heart is called upon to endure, he was compelled to struggle against his emotions, and to talk and to smile, while really sick at heart and half-distracted in mind. In some sense, it was a relief, therefore, when the coach called for him, and, after his hasty farewells, he could throw himself into a corner of the carriage, and pull his travelling-cap over his brows, without feeling under any obligation to be agreeable to whomsoever might prove to be the companions of his journey. Indeed, he deigned no further reply, than a rather sullen and scarcely perceptible nod, to one polite old gentleman, who

welcomed his introduction into the stage-coach by an interesting remark upon the fineness of the night; and a pretty girl, who had caught a glimpse of him, by the lights at the door, felt her sympathies a good deal excited for the cause, whatever it might be, of the manifestly engrossing reflections of the handsome young man.

The only public means of conveyance, at that period, from Eastford into Maine, was by the stage-coach, so that the journey afforded neither the rapid movement of the railway car, as at present, nor could the traveller enjoy, as he now may, from the deck of a gallant steamer, the enchanting scenery of the Kennebec, or the still bolder and wilder prospects which open upon his view, along the shores of the broad and noble Penobscot. Indeed, a journey of more than two hundred miles, by the mail, is a thing to be got over as comfortably as circumstances will permit, even when the horses are good, the coaches comfortable, the roads in fair condition, and the country is interesting; and it is certain that our traveller was well content, when the carriage, conveying the mail of the United States and divers miscellaneous passengers, drove up to its accustomed hotel in the thriving little town of Axeville, upon the second morning after he left home.

As soon as propriety allowed, after enjoying the refreshment of a substantial breakfast, Atherton waited upon the correspondent of Mr. May, and was received by him with the old-fashioned politeness of a class of lawyers and men, now almost gone off the stage. Mr. Rutledge was a gentleman, considerably advanced in life, of sound early education, and somewhat formal manners, of one of the old respectable families of Massachusetts; and had emigrated, many years before, into what was then an appanage of his native state, under the style of "the District of Maine," and a territory almost wild, for the purpose of pursuing his profession and coming forward with those who were led, by similar inclinations, into the same new field of enterprise to their various

occupations. The senior looked with interest upon the young gentleman.

“Mr. Atherton,” said he, shaking him cordially by the hand, “I am most happy to see you in Maine. I have never seen your father, sir, but I had the pleasure to meet your grandfather, Colonel Atherton, when I was a young man, and went down once with my own father to the General Court of Massachusetts. We see few such persons, now-a-days, as Colonel Atherton; he was a very hale and noble specimen of a man; he can hardly be living, surely, — no, — that would be a very advanced age.”

“No,” George informed him, “his grandfather had been dead quite a number of years.”

“Yes, so we go, Mr. Atherton. You are looking finely, sir; you left your friends all well, I trust, in the old state, and my good friend, Mr. May.”

“All extremely well, sir, I thank you. Mr. May desired his special regards to you. I assure you I feel quite anxious in regard to this business, in which he has so deep an interest.”

“Ah, it’s his own interest, is it? Bless my soul! I did not observe that,” — looking once more at the letter, which Atherton had handed him. “Yes, yes, I see, — let me run over this deed, if you please, — let me see, — why, it’s twenty-four years ago this September coming, — that’s a long time for a deed to go unrecorded, — of course, you can prove the manner of its loss and the strange way it turned up again. However, nobody’s bound to put his deed on record, unless he chooses, — that’s a matter between him and his grantor, unless the grantor’s a rogue, and a second purchaser intervenes — that’s what I’m afraid of. This old Gammon is dead, and I have n’t much opinion of his boys, if they’ve found the deed is unrecorded. Let me look at the survey of this tract,” — taking down a roll of surveys or plans of territory. “We have to keep posted up in these matters, Mr. Atherton.

Let me see, — this is not in the Waldo Patent, or the Bingham Purchase — ‘west of the north-easterly line of the state,’ — yes, this is the Holton Grant, — ‘Township number Four, first range — west of the north-easterly line of the state,’ yes, sir,” — taking off his spectacles and pointing with them, folded, to the proper place upon the plan, — “the registry is in ——— county, town of ———. Now, our best course is, to send the deed forthwith for record; you are too much fatigued, for another hundred miles through our rough country; I will forward this, at once, by a trusty messenger, and, in the mean time, we can consult upon further proceedings.”

Atherton professed his readiness to undertake the journey; but this proposition Mr. Rutledge overruled, as not likely to expedite the business, seeing he was a stranger to the country. Accordingly, the old gentleman soon procured a suitable agent, whom he despatched forthwith to the shire town of ——— county, with instructions to see the instrument put on record, and to bring it back with him with the least possible delay.

“Now, my dear sir,” said he, “you are in my hands, and I shall keep you pretty close till Rankin gets back. A suspicion of our purpose, in certain quarters, might defeat all our hopes. We have some pretty sharp folks amongst us down-easters, and when all the world is head-over-heels in speculation, amid so many conflicting interests, one scarcely knows what ground he’s treading on. I assure you, it’s something like walking over a mine, and the next minute, you may be sky-high. By the way, did you enter your name at the hotel?”

“I did not, sir. I knew there were people here likely to know me; and though I have moved so rapidly, it is very improbable any knowledge or suspicion could exist as to my business, I thought it best to avoid curiosity or inquiry, and preferred to see you, before I set down my name or residence.”

“That was a shrewd move! Now, you shall go to my house; I’ll get your trunk away from the hotel, — no, no, sir, I shall take no refusal, — Mrs. Rutledge will be delighted to see you, — we are not fashionable enough, in this new country, to forget hospitality, — and then, you see, we shall be fighting the enemy behind a masked battery.”

Upon being introduced to the wife of his host, Atherton found Mrs. Rutledge to be one of those charming old ladies, who, to the dignity proper to age, united the vivacity of an earlier period of life. She had a great deal to say about the old families of Massachusetts, with whom her own family had had much intercourse, during her youth, before she accompanied her husband into the wild settlements of the District of Maine; and she had a thousand recollections and stories of people and events of the old time, in regard to which Atherton had been in the habit of hearing much conversation, in his grandfather’s day, and subsequently at his father’s house and that of Miss Dudley. With all this, Mrs. Rutledge was extremely well read; and we have observed that persons of taste and intelligence, who reside apparently quite out of what is somewhat impertinently called “the world,” are apt to be at least as well informed, and quite as thoroughly abreast of the current literature of the day, as inhabitants of the most enlightened metropolis. And not unfrequently it will be found, that they have reflected full as profoundly and judiciously upon life and letters, as those who, perhaps, regard them as little better than mere rustics. At all events, the society of these intelligent and excellent people was highly agreeable to Atherton; for, youthful as he was, his mind revelled in the past, as much as Mary May had intimated it bounded towards the future; and he held that he who disregarded the lessons of history was not likely to be very wise for himself, or very serviceable towards his country. The several days, therefore, which elapsed before the return of Rankin, passed away pleasantly enough; and, in the afternoons, Mr. Rutledge would

take his guest agreeable drives around the interesting and only partially cultivated neighborhood, to some broad pond, with its wooded parks and lovely islands, it may be, which in other countries would be accounted a considerable lake ; or up the beautiful river, to the Indian settlement ; offering scenes of no little novelty and interest to a resident of a state, from which almost all traces of the aboriginal inhabitants had long since past away.

Upon the return of Mr. Rankin, with the instrument suitably recorded, he informed Mr. Rutledge, that he met a surveyor of his acquaintance at the Registry of Deeds, who stated that he knew this particular tract very well, and had visited it within a recent period ; and that "operations," as he called it, were now going forward upon the land, and, in case of a freshet, there would be a large run of logs this very season. The surveyor had made no particular inquiries, he said, as he was hurrying along, but he believed the gang employed in lumbering were in the service of Mr. Gammon.

"We must put a stop to this at once," cried Mr. Rutledge ; "and now we've got our title safe and sound, we'll have a little interview with this same Mr. Gammon, and see what account he gives of himself."

To the counting-house or store of that person they at once proceeded. This active and enterprising citizen was a person extensively engaged in speculation and lumbering "operations." Connected with his office, or counting-room, was a store, supplied with a considerable variety of domestic and foreign goods, with which he was in the habit of fitting out his lumbermen for their expeditions "into the woods," and which afforded also the ordinary means of settling with them for their services, at the close of the season, reserving, no doubt, some fair commission for the purchase and exchange of commodities and labor. Quite a number of these rough-looking personages, with sunburnt visages and unkempt locks, were hanging about the store, wearing round-topped hats, and shirts

of red baize, or else of blue material, wrought over the breast with various fanciful devices, in white colors, probably by the fair hands of each one's special sweetheart; and a few Indian women were also trading at the counter, in a very mingled jargon, their black eyes gleaming beneath broad-brimmed and high-crowned manly hats, which surmounted their swarthy features, and long, shining locks of midnight-colored blackness. In other respects, their calico dresses assimilated somewhat in fashion to the usual garments of their sex, and over their necks they wore divers broad ornaments of silver, and often long pendants of the same metal in their ears. As Atherton paused a moment, holding Mr. Rutledge's arm, to gaze upon these singular and always interesting human beings, one of the Indian women good-naturedly addressed an unusually pale-faced and ordinary-looking American female, who had entered the store to make some trifling purchase.

"Seee, seester?" in a very soft and musical voice.

"No!" replied the female, rather repulsively.

"Sorry, seester?" persisted the savage.

"No, guess not," said the female; whereupon the Indian women gabbled away to each other, in a very animated but somewhat guttural and unintelligible manner and form of speech. Mr. Gammon was found within his inner store, whittling away with a jack-knife at a good-sized shingle, and was engaged, no doubt, in reflections upon some promising speculation. He descended from a high stool, upon which he was perched, for the purpose of receiving his visitors, and glanced from Mr. Rutledge to his companion with a small, sharp, dark and rather restless eye. As soon as the ceremony of introduction was completed, the old lawyer summarily opened the business.

"We have called, Mr. Gammon," said he, "for the purpose of exhibiting to you a deed of a tract of land conveyed

by your late father, upon which you are said to be now getting off the stumpage."

"Deed! You an't got no deed o' mine, have you, squire? I got so much o' this plaguy stuff on my shoulders, don't no half the time where I am."

"No; this is a conveyance to another party."

"Want to know! guess not. Father was pretty sharp and mighty reg'lar in all his matters. Fact is, squire, he knew what he was about; don't believe there's any lot you can show a deed in afore mine. What survey's this 'ere in?"

"I think we can satisfy you, Mr. Gammon, that there has been some misapprehension about this matter. This is in the Holton purchase, township number four, first range west of the north-easterly line of the state; and was conveyed by your father, by deed duly executed, to Mr. Langdon Bell, formerly of Eastford, and more lately of Colesville, Pennsylvania, for a valuable consideration, in the year 18—; which interest is now represented by Henry May, Esquire, of Eastford, and his wife, sole surviving daughter of Mr. Bell; and on their behalf our friend, Mr. Atherton, now appears."

"Never heerd nothin' about it afore; pretty picee o' business that would be, when I've bought and paid for it, — high figure, too. Deed recorded, squire?" — fumbling amongst a file of papers in his safe. "If I'm operating on the stumpage, rely on 't the lot's mine."

"Here is the minute of the record, Mr. Gammon. You will perceive it is long subsequent to the execution of the deed. — in fact, only within a few days. The deed, sir, was long supposed to be lost, but has recently come back to our possession by a very singular accident."

"Accidents will happen, squire. People ought to have their deeds recorded. Your'n would certainly be good, if 't wan't for this 'ere. What do you say to that 'ere document, Squire Rutledge?" handing that gentleman a paper, which, upon looking it over, he found to be a conveyance of the tract

in question, for the sum of twenty thousand dollars, executed by old Mr. Gammon to his son Ramble Gammon, the present claimant, about five years before, and duly recorded at the time.

“I think you’ll find that co-rect, squire. Father was always particular ’bout these ’ere things.”

“Mr. Gammon,” said Mr. Rutledge, “nothing can be more certain, than that your late father must have been aware of his previous conveyance of this township to Mr. Bell. Men of business could hardly be subject to such extraordinary forgetfulness in those times; even supposing it possible they could overlook the conveyance of such a considerable tract of land, now, when affairs are so much more mixed up. As to your own knowledge of this fact, you, of course, possess the most accurate information.”

“Do you suppose me such a fool as to pay twenty thousand dollars for a tract of land, where I could n’t get no title?”

“I do not, Mr. Gammon; and, since it is very unlikely that your father conveyed this to you, without explaining the whole transaction, I will propose to you, for the sake of a quiet settlement of the affair, that you abandon this land to its rightful owners, for the *actual* consideration paid by you, which I need not name; in that case, I think I may say, Mr. Atherton, we will make no claim against you for stumpage already secured, which I understand is of small amount, nor institute any other proceedings against you, for the trespass.”

“Trespass, squire, on my own land, hey! Likely story, when I’ve got a deed! I guess that gives me title enough.”

“I doubt whether you have even a colorable title, Mr. Gammon. Can you, and will you, inform me, sir, where the witnesses to this former deed of your father’s may be found?”

“Who are they? John Tapp, and Richard Fassett,” — glancing at the deed; “don’no nothin’ about ’em — believe Tapp’s dead, and Fassett went off — said he wan’t o’ no more use — haw, haw, haw!”

Our friends left the premises of Mr. Gammon, with little show of ceremony.

“It is as I feared,” said Mr. Rutledge, on their way to his office; “old Gammon somehow discovered the Bell deed was not recorded, when interest began to be excited in these lands, and has made a conveyance to the younger rascal, which is unquestionably fraudulent; for, though rogues prey on each other, I suppose it would be too violent a presumption to think a father would cheat his own son in this way.”

“But how can we trace notice home to Gammon?” inquired Atherton.

“Ah, that’s the question! We’ll see the magistrate, forthwith, before whom this deed was acknowledged; he may possibly remember something about it, though it is a good while ago, and these witnesses, if living, must be looked up. If anybody on earth can find them, it is Rankin.”

Upon calling in the services of Mr. Rankin,—who, it seemed, was a kind of half-surveyor and agent for the purchasers and sellers of lands, in a small way, and the general runner, in miscellaneous jobs of business, for Mr. Rutledge and others, and accounted a person of much honesty as well as shrewdness,—it appeared that he had formerly known all about the witnesses to the Bell deed.

“Tapp and Fassett,” said he, “I remember them very well; they were both lumbermen, in the employ of old Gammon, and used to witness his deeds quite often. I’ve not seen either of them, for a good while,—I think scarcely since the old man died; and now I remember hearing one or the other of them, perhaps both, went off to the Kennebec, several years ago. I think they might be found, if they’re alive.”

It was finally determined, that Atherton should accompany

Rankin across the country, in search of the errant witnesses, while Mr. Rutledge should make such investigations as he could, at home, and especially should institute immediate proceedings against Gammon, to stay waste.

In the mean time, Atherton's letters to his friends at home were constant and interesting. Those to Mr. May contained little besides the details of business; but to Alice he wrote much more particularly.

“As to the progress of our legal matters, my dear sister, you will learn this from our friend, Mr. May; but I have enjoyed my visit to this part of the country, as much as is possible for one absent from dear friends, and who is in a rather uneasy state of mind. The weather, generally, has been perfectly delicious; and you would have been enchanted with the drives I have had, along these quiet roads and through the still woods, in which the soft repose of the summer day is unbroken, except, perhaps, by the distant call of some strange bird, or, as I have often fancied, by the cry of some unknown and wild creature of the forest. Then, the very smell of these pine woods is reviving, especially where they are interspersed, as is often the case, with the cedar of this region, the fragrance of which is peculiarly balmy and grateful.

“In many respects, this is a very odd-looking country to an eye accustomed to the more regular and uniform signs of cultivation, in an older-settled territory. The villages are more distant from each other, and the intervening space will present, perhaps, scarcely a solitary farm-house; or, you may drive through some very pretty and neat, though quiet-looking town, the houses bright with paint and its whole aspect exhibiting every mark of civilized life, and then turn a corner in the well-made road, on the very skirts of the town, into the depths of the primeval forest!

“I gave you a hint, in my last, of my visit, with Mr. Rutledge, to the pretty island, in the Penobscot, which the rem-

nant of the Indians, who rejoice in the name of that river, still hold in possession, and under a sort of government of their own, though subject to the guardianship of the State of Maine. I regret to say, that, with some of the vices of civilization, these children of nature have also imitated, *non pari passu*, certain of its modes of life, and, strange to say, inhabit houses instead of wigwams! Some of these houses are neat enough, but their want of aptitude for this style of existence is obvious. We paid our respects to *the Governor*, whose residence is, by no means, a palace. In fact, we found his excellency, who is rather *hors-du-combat*, by reason of advanced age, and therefore less able to maintain his establishment in prosperous condition, inhabiting one of the least inviting of all the residences on the island. The Governor is a short, stout, but still powerful old Indian, reminding me very much, by his color, rotundity, and even now the litheness of his movements, of an India-rubber ball. As we entered, he was curled up in bed, or rather upon a not very clean blanket, which constituted the entire bed furniture; from which the venerable man rolled, with singular agility, upon observing our informal approach; since, without the ceremony of knocking, we lifted the latch of his chamber of presence. A table, a cracked looking-glass, a bed in the opposite corner, and, to the best of my recollection, a single low chair, — upon which was seated the ‘fair daughter of his house and heart,’ weaving a willow-basket, after the domestic fashion of the ancient kings and rulers of the earth, — constituted the only other furniture of the apartment. Had there been any really responsible party, as we were much fatigued with our long stroll, I think I should have been tempted to apply the poet’s objurgation, in *gude braid Scots*, —

‘ Baron O’Bucklivie,
The foul fiend drive ye,
And a’ to pieces rive ye,

For building sic a town, —
Where there 's neither horse-meat nor man's meat,
Nor a chair to sit down.'

“ At all events, we stood, during the brief period passed by us, in the presence of this great dignity. His age we took the liberty to inquire, — on which point he professed to have no exact information, but thought he was ‘ more than eighty ; ’ — others, we found, pronounced him nearer a hundred, judging by what they had learned of his early history ; and, looking upon him, we thought this well might be, notwithstanding, his hair was black as night, and his eye like an eagle's.

“ Of the fashions, Ally, in this metropolis of savagedom, I could give you no useful account, were I to attempt their description. Certain it is, that the prevailing color is *blue*, agreeably diversified with *red* and often *yellow*, both of which brilliant and striking tints, I could not help thinking, suited well with the bronzed complexions and dark gleaming masses of hair, which distinguish

‘ Their feathered-cinctured chiefs and dusky loves.’

“ Absolute personal beauty, I am told, is not a very common characteristic of these Indian damsels ; but I certainly caught a glimpse of one, through an open window, who struck me as extremely pretty, in this particular style, namely, black hair, low forehead, complexion

‘ The shadowed livery of the burnished sun,’ —

eyes shining black, teeth really brilliant in whiteness, rounded face, features exquisitely moulded, and the sweetest-formed mouth you ever saw, except in the mirror, dear, and in one other countenance. Put me down for an expert in making out beauty's schedule ! The name of this charmer, we were told, was *Blanche*. The tribe receives religious instruction occasionally from a French Catholic priest.

“ The tenor of your news from home, my dear little sister, makes me impatient of an absence which, I fear, may be indefinitely prolonged. The ‘sobriety’ of one of our nearest friends pains and at the same time stimulates me. The picture of her face, as I saw it, on that last evening, is so imprinted on my — heart, I may as well say, that no chance nor change, nor any length of absence, can alter it. Write, darling — write in full, and ‘haste — haste — post haste,’ to

“ Your most affectionate brother,

“ GEORGE.”

Although many interesting events occurred, before the reception of Alice’s reply to this epistle, yet, as we deem this the most convenient place to set down an extract from the letter of that young lady, and as this letter is without date, no objection can exist to our inserting a portion of it here.

“ I cannot pretend to offer anything in return, George, for the fresher scenes which you so happily describe. Affairs in poor old Eastford run on in their usual quiet way, and I doubt if anything has occurred here, either of a public or private nature, which it would be particularly interesting to you to know. Our solid and sober newspaper, which you used to laugh at so, for limping along, as you alleged, behind the times, but which you *always* read over sedulously, I believe, from beginning to end, at breakfast-time, favoring your father’s family with your sage remarks upon its contents, may have had ever so much *learned and profound disquisition* on the most important matters, for aught I know ; but, for want of an expositor, poor I have lost the benefit of it altogether. Father glances it over, I believe, sometimes ; but, as I often find it folded, as if it had not been disturbed, upon his table, when I arrange his study for the day, I think he now relies entirely upon mother to keep him acquainted with the course of outer events, and she usually finds time to run it over in the course of the morning.

“ *All* our friends are well as usual. Aunt Sibyl, of course, I see constantly, and went up to-day to present her with a copy of the new edition of ‘*Saturday Evening*,’ for her birth-day present. She had read over my copy with so much pleasure, that I thought I could not gratify her more than to present her with this delightful book. Perhaps we should not agree with *every one* of the ideas of this admirable writer ; but I am sure no reflecting person could read such a book without improvement, or without gaining some actual elevation of character. And this puts me in mind that we have had an event, after all. What do you think of a *book-auction*, dear ? How sorry you will be that you were away ! Some former resident of Eastford — a Mr. Rawson — has lately died, somewhere at a distance, who had been rather a curious collector of books, I believe, and many of them were here, and have now been sold. I assure you the sale made *quite a sensation* amongst the *few* who take much interest in such matters. Father attended, and bought such as he thought he could afford ; and Mr. May bought quite a large collection. ‘*Walton’s Lives*,’ and Wharton’s ‘*History of English Poetry*,’ — a *London Edition*, — in four volumes, — what do you think of that, sir ? — are amongst our acquisitions ; and father, — I don’t think he’ll half like my telling you, — but he bought for you a very handsome edition of ‘*Plutarch* ;’ for he said you were so fond of poring over the old volume, it must gratify you to see your *old friend with a new face*.

“ I have just dipped into the ‘*Lives*,’ and read a few pages in ‘*Wharton* ;’ but these we will keep till the long evenings ; and Mary and I are depending upon having the benefit of your learning and literature to aid us in our studies. There ! I declare I’ve told something again ; and Mary did not wish me to say that we had spoken of this ; but I never could keep anything from you, George, and *I do not desire* to have any secrets from a brother who loves me so fondly, and whom I love dearly — dearly, Georgy, you know that.

“ What I *could* have said in my letter about ‘*sobriety*,’ I’m sure I do not know ; it must have been a mere casual remark. You would scarcely have thought us very *sober*, if you had heard Mary and me shouting over some parts of your letter. Perhaps you intended to rouse somebody’s jealousy, by your *rather warm* description of the *Indian belle* ; but it won’t go down, sir. Your true lover is a person too much overwhelmed and dazzled by the *tout ensemble* of his mistress’ charms, to be able to go into such an auctioneer’s catalogue of particulars ; on the contrary, he rather holds, with such worthies, ‘*particulars too numerous to mention.*’

“ And now, my darling brother, pray come home ; that is, as soon as you get your business settled satisfactorily, and O, I do hope, *on many accounts*, successfully ! We quite pine for you ; that is, I do, dear. Father and mother are quite anxious for your success. Mother wishes me to ask you to guard against the night air, which, she understands, is rather damp near those large eastern rivers. All send love, — Aunt Sibyl particularly, — and Mary wishes to be kindly remembered to you in return for your message. Ever, dearest, your affectionate sister,

ALICE.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ *Lear.* ——Bring in the evidence, —
Thou robed man of justice, take thy place,
And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity.”

KING LEAR.

“ *Dogb.* O, villain! thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this.” — MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

WHILE Atherton and his companion were looking up Messrs. Tapp and Fassett, on the Kennebec, Mr. Rutledge at home, besides his writ of entry, had instituted summary process against Gammon. The bill in this case, which was drawn up with particular care and skill, it would give us pleasure to cite, but we fear it would not prove interesting to the generality of our readers. At all events, its recital, together with the production of the deeds of conveyance and the admitted fact that Gammon was “operating” upon the premises, proved satisfactory to the court; so that it directed temporary decree of injunction to issue to restrain waste, and ordered process returnable at an early date, requiring the respondent to come in and show cause why the rule should not be made absolute. Happily the return-day coincided with a regular term of the court.

In the mean time, our friend Atherton, aided by the unwearied exertions and skilful management of Rankin, had traced the recreant Fassett, from one point to another, — and he seemed a person without any settled domicile, — having followed him from Risingtown to Cathaunts, and so on to

Wolfsbridge, and thence to Moose-camp, where they were compelled to strike across the country again towards the Penobscot; until at length they came upon that worthy, in charge of logs for some mills down the river, at a place called Newtown Dead Water.

Mr. Fassett was decidedly what is sometimes called "a rough customer," that is, in external appearance; and exhibited all the rude characteristics which, at that time, distinguished the lumbermen who frequented our eastern rivers. He was an elderly man, of bronzed complexion, but iron frame, and was arrayed in the usual habiliments of his class, to wit: a red baize shirt, though the weather was that of summer, without any outside garment, and wearing a broad-brimmed chip hat upon his shaggy head, which was well covered with reddish-gray hair. He looked reckless and daring, yet anything but a designing character, and had, indeed, rather an air of frankness, correspondent with the bold and hardy pursuits of his life. He greeted Mr. Rankin as an old acquaintance, and laughed loud and long, when that gentleman promptly made known the object of the visit. His reply to Atherton's inquiry was characteristic and a little ejaculatory.

"Wall, now, thunder! I told him so; 't a'n't no use to go to cheatin' 'bout land; cause why? — there 't is, — can't put a township in your breeches' pocket; ef any owner is to be, he 'll turn up. This Ramble's devilish sly, but no sort of item to the old man, squire."

"You remember about this deed, then, Mr. Fassett?"

"Parfikly, squire. Squire, I calk'late to do about right. I a'n't a-goin' to tell no lies for nobody. If you or your folks has got the title, I'm parfikly willin' to tell all I know about this ere land."

"We have a deed, Mr. Fassett, executed by old Mr. Gammon more than twenty years ago."

"Edzackly. Ramble's a'n't more 'n five years old."

"What we wish to ascertain, Mr. Fassett, is, if you know

that Mr. Ramble Gammon was aware of this conveyance by his father to Mr. Bell."

"Sartain I do, squire. Perhaps I should n't be so particular about it, only I heered it talked on in the store. Ramble, he insisted this ere deed was lost, or somethin' or other; 'cause why? 't wa' n't on record; the old man he was sort o' backward about makin' out a new deed, but Ramble overpersuaded him. Old man Gammon said it must be gi'n up, ef ever t' other deed come to light."

"They seem to have talked pretty freely before you, Mr. Fassett," said Atherton.

"Never minded me much. Ye see, I was out and in there most all the time, when I wa'n't off in the woods."

"You do not appear to have witnessed the last deed; how is that, Mr. Fassett?"

"Don'no; never axed me."

"How came you up here?" inquired Rankin; "I thought they did pretty well by you."

"Wall, that 's the most cur'ous part on 't. Don'no what *you* call pretty well, Mr. Rankin; I call 'em pretty hard ones; never could get forehanded, nor more'n hold my own. Hows'ever, arter the old man died, says Ramble, says he, 'Fassett, why don't you go over to the Kennebec? I believe you 'd get a better livin' there than anywheres hereabouts.' Thinks says I, what 's in the wind now? for I mistrusted something; hows'ever, I speaks up, and says I, 'What 's the encouragement, Ramble?' I always called him Ramble, for I 've know'd him ever since he was so high. So says I, 'I know you want to get rid o' me for somethin' or other; but what 's the encouragement, Ramble?' And so he says, says he, 'That 's neither here nor there; but if you 'll go over t' the Kennebec, or anywheres else out of the way, and stay there, I 'll move your folks over, and give you a hundred dollars.' 'Plank your money,' says I, and he did, — if he never was up t' the mark afore, he was then, — and so I went over,

squire; but I could n't do so well there, so I come up here, and here I am."

"And, I suppose, you have no objection to going back, for a while, have you, Mr. Fassett?"

"Wall, I don't no. Honor bright!—I promised to stay; not forever, though;—not encouragement enough for that, squire. Now if I was only summonsed like, should have to go over, you know," with rather a knowing look.

"Very well," said Rankin, "here's your summons; I have brought it with me; I'm a deputy sheriff, you know, and here's your fees. See, it's all right, Fassett."

"Ah, that's another matter! Could n't think o' disobeying the summons o' the Supreme Court o' the State o' Maine," looking carefully at the precept. "I'll be all ready, soon as I see our Mr. Hubbard, and tell him where I'm agoin' to."

The latter part of their journey had been performed in a wagon, driven by Mr. Rankin, and in the same vehicle the whole party were speedily conveyed to the nearest stage-station; and, with as little delay as possible, down the river to the brisk city of Axeville. Mr. Rutledge, in the mean time, had had many conferences with the magistrate, before whom the deed to Mr. Bell had been acknowledged, and now, fortified by the statement of Fassett, he pronounced it, rubbing his hands joyfully, a perfectly clear case.

In due time the court came to its session, and, by a happy chance, and some disposition to accommodate a stranger, as Atherton was,—not to mention a general desire to witness the hoped-for result against a person so little esteemed as Ramble Gammon,—the great case of *May et al, vs. Gammon* was called for hearing. It was opened in a very handsome manner by Atherton himself, permitted to appear *ex comitate* for this purpose, although he held, in fact, a special power of attorney, which it was unnecessary for him to exhibit; and thereupon the court directed an issue to be framed, in order that the jury might ascertain the fact of notice or no notice,

to Gammon, of the previous conveyance by his father to Mr. Bell. When the witnesses were called, Ramble turned very pale, upon seeing Fassett, of whose arrival, it seemed, he had not been aware, and held a whispered conference with his attorney, who was observed to shake his head, and to look rather flustered. They appeared to have determined, however, to let things take their course, and the first witness was put upon the stand. This was Mr. Hayford, the magistrate above referred to; who testified, in brief, that he well remembered the transaction to which his attention was called. "At first," he said, "he had forgotten some of the particulars; but upon referring to his books of account and papers on file, he believed there was nothing of consequence, to which he would be unable to testify. His interest had been more especially excited in regard to this affair, because it was one of the earliest, if not absolutely the first attempt to introduce Pennsylvania coal into that region, where they had enjoyed such an abundance of fire-wood, for fuel. He had discovered, upon reference, and well remembered the fact, that a bond had been executed to Mr. Bell by old Mr. Gammon, covenanting for the conveyance, by deed of warranty, of the tract of land in question, upon the delivery of a certain quantity of coal at Axeville, — how much, he did not remember, or never knew; but several cargoes. This bond, by agreement, had remained in his own possession, until the completion of the contract; and he had then gone to the house of Mr. Gammon, who was ill at the time, for the purpose of taking acknowledgment of the deed; and Ramble Gammon had accompanied him to his office to take up the bond, upon the delivery of the deed to Mr. Bell's attorney. He had found upon his book a memorandum of the delivery of this bond to Ramble in person, and also, on file, the receipt of that individual for the document in question." Some faint attempt to cross-question this respectable gentleman proved entirely futile.

The only other witness was Mr. Fassett, who, with much plainness of speech, testified to the purport of what he had previously signified to Atherton, at Newtown Dead Water. The evidence submitted by him possessed this additional weight, that he had heard the affair talked over, more or less, by Ramble Gammon and his late father, at a comparatively recent period. Any attempt to meet testimony such as this, was, of course, idle; and the jury found, without leaving their seats, under the brief instructions of the court, that, at the time of his pretended purchase of the land in question, Ramble Gammon had notice of, and well knew, the fact of the conveyance by his grantor to a previous purchaser.

The conveyance to Gammon, therefore, was pronounced fraudulent by the court; the transaction was properly characterized in a few severe words, and the decree of injunction was made absolute.

There seemed so desperate a prospect of making any change in this result, that Gammon's counsel did not even intimate a purpose of attempting any further proceedings, but bundled up his papers, and deliberately walked out of the courthouse. Before Atherton and Mr. Rutledge, however, could reach the office of the latter gentleman, after having received the warm congratulations of their friends, they were overtaken by Mr. Gammon.

"Now the case is gone ag'in me, squire," said that worthy, "in this court, seems to me, should like to make some sort o' compromise; I'm willin' to do this thing on fair terms, and not go no furdur with it."

"How much further do you expect to go in this matter, Mr. Gammon?" inquired Mr. Rutledge.

"Why, this don't settle no title, does it? only stops my operatin'; got a good many folks up there; should like to go ahead."

"Be sure your're right first, Mr. Gammon,—I'll give you that piece of advice now,—and then, as to the title, if

you dare to commit the slightest trespass on this land, or attempt any negotiation about it, after this decree, I'll give you the information, that you'll be in a tighter place than you ever saw before."

"O, 'ts o' no sort o' use to be wrathy, squire! I on'y want what the law gives me a right to. I'm willin' to give a fair price for this 'ere land."

"Your previous conduct gives us reason to expect all fairness from you, Mr. Gammon," said Atherton; "but I wish you to understand, once for all, that I desire no sort of dealing or conversation with you."

"Well, well, I guess you'll find it not so easy to git possession; there's more 'n one squatter on the premises, I can tell ye. Now I calc'late I can manage them sort o' critters decently well,—I'm used to 'em; you'll find that 'ere another guess matter, I'm a thinkin'."

"Very well, sir, we shall see," said Atherton.

In his letter to Mr. May, by the next mail, Atherton informed that gentleman of his success.

— "After all our trouble, my dear sir, this result is most happy. Our triumph is complete in really establishing our title, besides exposing a scoundrel, which is always a good work. I congratulate you most sincerely upon your success, which is of no small pecuniary consequence. Mr. Rutledge assures me, from the best information he can obtain, that this land, though not so accessible as many other tracts, is valuable, and will become more so; and would now readily command, say, a dollar and a half, and perhaps more, an acre, of a substantial purchaser. There is a vast deal of land here, floating in the market, so to speak, and constantly changing hands. A great many of the older settlers, I find, are disposed to hold on, in expectation of higher prices; but this is a subject, upon which I hardly feel myself qualified to form an accurate judgment. Without your opinion, and abso-

lute instructions, notwithstanding your full power to me, and your constant and flattering abandonment of the whole matter to my charge, in your several letters, I shall do nothing, as to the conveyance, or agreement for conveyance, of the premises.

“The time has slipped away here rapidly, though I am surprised, upon looking back, to observe how many weeks I have been absent from home. I am now getting impatient for my return; but I have determined, while awaiting your reply to this letter, to make one other journey, for the purpose of going upon this land and seeing its actual condition; particularly, as Gammon threw out some intimations of difficulties we might have with squatters. I pay little regard to this, but think it best to employ the few days before I can hear from you in this expedition. Rankin, the surveyor and deputy sheriff, who accompanied me to the Kennebec, and who is a most efficient and intelligent person, will go with me. I trust soon to rejoin our friends at home, to whom I beg my best remembrances, and am, dear sir,

“Most faithfully yours,

“GEORGE ATHERTON.”

Mr. May's reply arrived during the absence of Atherton, but the letter was opened by Mr. Rutledge, in accordance with the request of his young friend. We quote a part:

“The news of your complete success, my dear George (I say *your* success, for I do not know what *I* have had to do with it, though you call it *mine*), gratifies me exceedingly. This Gammon must be a precious rascal, though, unluckily, our profession brings us acquainted with too many such. As for the land, sell it at once. In regard to details, of course, you can have no better adviser than my old friend Rutledge; but of the prudence of disposing of it forthwith, even at some apparent sacrifice, I have no sort of question. Our object

should be to avoid all future concern with it. I should prefer cash, therefore, at some loss; or, if this mode of sale be not possible, at least, obtain such securities, at short date, as can easily be realized, without our own liability. I am anxious, you perceive, to bring our own connection with the affair to an entire conclusion. There can be no difficulty in this, for old Gammon's title being good, as you say you have fully ascertained, our own, of course, is perfect. Sell, therefore, my dear boy, and come home, as soon as you get back from this *rather wild excursion*, on which you have now started; for I see no reason why we should go to war with the *squatters*, if there are any, at our own charges, instead of leaving the fight, problematical or otherwise, to our respected successors, who are nearer the seat of war, and better understand the enemy.

“All my family are well, and anxious to see you — Aunt Sibyl really pines for you, and your mother and the rest really look on me with some suspicion, as the wicked cause of your protracted absence. But all desire their congratulations, and none more than

“Your friend and servant,

26

“HENRY MAY.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

“On the affairs of Egypt, brother.”

BIBLE IN SPAIN.

“Much in the stranger’s mien appears
To justify suspicious fears.”

ROKEBY.

IN pursuance of the purpose, indicated in the letter from which we have been enabled to quote in the last chapter, our travellers started betimes the next morning upon their journey to the upper country. Towards evening of the second day, they had arrived within a few miles of their place of destination. For a considerable portion of the way, their road had lain through the native forest, undisturbed, probably, by human footstep, since the birth of nature, until the more recent convenience of man had required this path to penetrate its depths. Mile after mile of this shaded track seemed to lead them through a never-ending vista of foliage.

Very silent and solitary lay the road before them, especially during the journey of the second day. So perfect was the repose, which brooded along the forest-path, that one felt almost as if imperceptibly wafted through a region of the sphere of dreams, instead of moving, by mere mechanical agency, along one of the highways of this living and breathing world. The very roll of the wheels seemed almost like an intrusion and a molestation. Occasionally, they would overtake a heavily-loaded team or two, in company, drawn by four and sometimes by six horses, stoutly harnessed, as if

for hard service, conveying ample supplies of the substantial necessaries of life to some remote village, it may be, or quite as likely to the camp of the lumbermen ; or would meet similar teams upon their return from their distant journeys, freighted with the material furnished by some mill of the woods. Occasionally, a quiet village would burst upon them at a turn of the road, but not a single human being would be visible ; all the men, very likely, absent logging, and the women, possibly, "huckleberrying." At all events, in spite of Yankee curiosity, not a face would show itself at any door or window. It was like that city described in the Arabian Nights, which was full of the builded works of man, but without apparent inhabitants. As you drove by the silent dwellings, you felt that your arrival and passage must constitute the one great event of the long, drowsy summer day ; and yet here was no one to witness or communicate the fact. One country-tavern, at which the stage-coach drew up, seemed actually so deserted. A very vigorous effort to wake up something availed, at length, to bring forward a small boy of the vicinity, from whom they learned that the whole family had gone to spend the day with a distant neighbor, and an equally faithful examination of the house produced no more flattering results than some very-unsubstantial cake, and not a very liberal supply of milk, for the hungry and weary travellers, who left their money upon the table.

The country through which they passed, as they caught glimpses of it from hills, over which the road ascended, or through partial clearings of the forest, presented scenes of great beauty and fertility. It was richly watered by extensive ponds, fringed with foliage and flowers, and sleeping in shadows, and by streams, often of romantic sweetness ; it was agreeably diversified with lovely valleys and wooded summits ; while, at a distance, majestically rose long mountain ranges, or some bare and solitary peak, giving dignity and grandeur to the noble and enchanting landscape.

At length, as the evening drew on, they arrived at a tavern, situated amidst a group of half-a-dozen houses, quite at the highest elevation of a very considerable hill; and Atherton thought, as he looked abroad upon the extended prospect, lying fresh and verdant beneath the setting sun, that such a scene well repaid him for the somewhat toilsome journey which had led to its enjoyment. From this point, they proposed to strike off in the morning, by a bridle-path, into the woods, and the landlord readily engaged to supply them with horses for the excursion. Instead of the bustle which sets a hotel in town, and sometimes a country-inn, by the ears, that air of profound quiet, which we have already noticed, pervaded the establishment. In fact, they learned, at the supper-table where they partook of their evening meal, in company of the landlord and his family, that they were his only guests. Their supper, we may as well remark, consisted, besides a cup of very indifferent tea, of fried bacon and eggs, doughnuts and huckleberries, and that indigestible bread, which spoils New England stomachs and makes the whole population bilious. Pickles, of course, constituted an element of the repast.

The landlord proved to be a person of no little intelligence and importance. He was, in fact, the most substantial person of the neighborhood, and held the best farm. He was, besides, the only justice of the peace for many miles around, and a militia-officer, and was quite looked up to by the scattered inhabitants of the quarter, who yielded him a voluntary and ready respect. Upon making some inquiries of him, after supper, in regard to the land which they proposed to visit, he quite derided the idea of *squatters*.

“No such things, now-a-days,” said he; “there a’n’t nobody on the place, as I know of, but McQuillen; he lives — if you can call it living — on a bit he’s cleared up there; but he holds under Gammon, — that’s Ramble, not the old man, — least-ways, I always thought so; but he’s sort o’crazy, to my

thinking; never see him over t' our 'us, not more 'n once a year, or so, when he wants some notions, — powder, or like o' that. But if you talk about squatters, Mr. Rankin, when I was a young man, over on the Kennebec, I've seen the times when poor people gin a good deal o' trouble, and had a good deal, I guess. Ah, 't was wild times over there, I can tell you! We never see such now-a-days, and I hope to massy we never shall again."

"O, yes," said Mr. Rankin, "I've heard a great deal about that; they had the militia out, did n't they?"

"Lord bless your soul! yes, why," — opening his eyes very wide, — "why, they shot a surveyor, and got taken up for the murder, and, the talk was, they was going to rescue him from the law. All the country round was up in arms; the military turned out to protect the court, you see, and kept out, better part o' two months, till the trial was all over. O, I tell you, folks was secart enough then!"

"Why did they shoot this person, Mr. Redfield?" inquired Atherton. "I should hardly suppose a land quarrel would come to such desperate extremities."

"Lor! you can't tell nothin' about it; you're a young man, and ha'n't seen no such doins. I forget what he called your name, — Atherton? — yes. They were dreadful times, Mr. Atherton; things was more confused than you've any idee. You see, land titles in that territory, atween the Kennebec and the Penobscot, was all unsettled; there was the Bingham Purchase, and the Waldo Patent, and the Vassall Grant, and the Pejipscot Purchase, and the Browne Right, and the Plymouth Company, and the Boston Association, and I don't know how many more, all mixed up together, and nobody up there to look after any of them. You see, they wan't available, then, so nobody took no care on 'em; and so, settlers they went on, and some had deeds from somebody, — Lord knows who, — and some, I s'pose, had n't no deeds from nobody. But there they settled, and cleared up their lots, and

built log-housen, and reared up their families. And 't was kind o' hard, to be turned off arter all,—and some on 'em had been there a good many years; and they fit and fit, and had law-suit arter law-suit; and, whenever a case come on, all the old men, out o' th' back settlements used to be summonsed in; and some was pretty wild-looking characters, and some was old men with silvery hair, squire, leaning on their staffs, and looked as if they did come out the woods, or some stranger place, sartain. They were a wild set, I tell you, and some on 'em got terrible savage, and they used to threaten *and* swear; and a good many people got shot at, when they went through there. Why, Squire Brimblecom come down through the thicket once, and said 't was jess like runnin' a gauntlet. His old square-top shay was fairly riddled. He put his mare through, though — a smart critter she was! But O, 't was rough times over there!"

"What was the fate of the men who were arrested, Mr. Redfield?"

"Well, you could n't do nothin' with 'em; they had the best lawyers, of course, and got well defended; and a good many people kind o' pitied 'em, and some thought 't wan't real murder, — they 'd got sort o' riled up and believed they were defendin' their rights; and 't was all so mixed up, the jury, they concluded to let 'em off; though, in all reason, they were guilty o' killin' the man, to my mind, accordin' to law. What's your idee, squire? I think Mr. Rankin, here, said you was a lawyer from the Bay State."

"I can hardly judge of it, without knowing all the facts, Mr. Redfield; but it seems a pity they should not have been convicted of such a crime, if the evidence was sufficient."

"Why, they were all disguised like Injuns and so, but I guess the evidence was straight enough. Hows'ever, people settled down, they 'd better call it a kind o' chance-medley; but that was the cend of all such carryings-on. People

found there *was* law, and 't would n't do to have many more such capers."

At a good hour on the following morning, Squire Redfield furnished our travellers with the promised nags, and over Mr. Rankin's hung a pair of saddle-bags, supplied with some necessary refreshments, in case of extraordinary detention; and, cheered by the breath of the early air, and the promise of a beautiful day, they set off upon their expedition. A sharp ride of eight or ten miles, brought them to a drift-way into the woods, following the course of a small stream, which, Rankin said, would soon bring them to the scene of Gammon's "operations," and would, no doubt, conduct them to the vicinity of McQuillen's cabin. They found a good deal of timber had been felled in the neighborhood of the path, and partially prepared to be rolled into the stream, and so floated down to the main river, whenever a freshet rendered this operation practicable. They soon came upon a very rough bridle-path, along which they advanced for no great distance, when the clearing, of which they were in quest, suddenly presented itself.

Atherton and his companion pulled up their horses to contemplate, a moment, the lovely scene before their eyes. The clearing occupied a space of from thirty to forty acres of land, of quite an undulating character. At its farthest extremity, it ascended in a considerable hill, thickly covered with wood. It was surrounded by the dense forest, consisting of various descriptions of trees, in which, however, some species of evergreen, and often pines of majestic height and dimensions, predominated. Within this lay, thickly spread, the folded shadows, strongly contrasting with the morning sunshine, which glowed and revelled over the open ground. The luxuriant grass, tossing gently in the summer breeze, rose high around and above the blackened stumps of trees, relics of former burnings, and, interspersed with the flaming fire-weed and other gaudy flowers, partially veiled the uptorn roots of vari-

ous fantastic shapes, which, under a dimmer light, might seem almost like the dark coats and uplifted paws of some shaggy and lurking denizens of the wild. At the foot of the wooded hill ran a brawling brook, whitening, here and there, as it rippled over many a rock upon its bed, and between deep banks, evidently accustomed to swellings of its waters, which, at times, converted it into a much broader stream. Not far above the upper edge of the verdant bank, and near the base of the hill, stood a small and rude log cabin, overlooking the entire clearing. Hitching their horses in the shade, Atherton and his companion advanced towards the house, and passed across the brook upon stepping-stones, which now answered their purpose, although, when the stream was full, certain long planks, which lay upon the shore, apparently served as a rough bridge over its higher and more turbulent waters.

As they walked along the narrow path, which was nearly concealed by the bending grass, whose tall spires met and mingled above it, almost breast high, some of the smaller birds would start from their nests, or a gay and glittering insect fluttered by. Except such slight sounds, or perhaps the faintest tinkle of a distant cow-bell from the forest depths, universal silence reigned ; save the murmur of that breath of life which, in the most perfect solitude, always animates the atmosphere by day, and, growing softer and softer, as the evening hours proceed, is at length hushed into the unbroken stillness of midnight. The fall of their footsteps could scarcely be distinguished upon the soft and verdant path ; but when, finally, they stood upon the broad stone at the door of the house, and made their presence known by a rap, a deep and furious barking within, and the command of a stern voice, "Down, Stormer, down !" announced that the master was at home.

Upon this summons, the cabin-door was suddenly flung open, and the proprietor, shutting it behind him, stood with our

friends upon the broad, flat stone at the threshold, leaving his dog whining and scratching within.

“Who are you, and what are you after here?” he uttered, in a deep voice, as his visitors drew back a step or two from the presence of a person so striking in his aspect, and whose welcome evinced so little of the cordiality, or, at least, civility, which usually marks the manners of our country people. Of a height exceeding six feet by one or two inches, and of correspondent breadth of bone and muscle, these personal advantages constituted but a part of Mr. McQuillen’s remarkable characteristics. His age, it would seem, was a good deal under the middle period of life. His features were prominent and manly, and his complexion, naturally ruddy, was darkened by exposure to the sun and weather. An immense mass of waving chestnut hair fell, in careless locks, upon his shoulders, and shaded a forehead which was fair in tint, compared with the rest of his skin. A thick and unshorn beard, of lighter hue than his hair, hung over his exposed neck and breast. A shirt, open at the collar, and rolled above his elbows, displayed arms of no common proportions; and coarse trousers descending to his bare feet, constituted his entire garb. His deep-set, but well-opened, hazel eyes, of somewhat unsteady lustre, glanced rapidly from one to the other of his guests. Both of these were men of calm and undaunted resolution, but probably both together would have declined seeking an encounter with such an antagonist.

Their purpose, however, being of a character entirely pacific, Atherton endeavored, as well as he was able, to soothe the evidently excited feelings, to which their presence had given rise.

“We had no intention of intruding upon you, Mr. McQuillen,” he said; “and do not desire to give you any annoyance. You live so out of the world here, that I should suppose the occasional call of a visitor might be agreeable.”

“That depends on what they come for,” he spoke quickly

and sternly. "The solitude I live in, I have chosen for myself. When I wish to see men, I can seek them. Such as I do see, want nothing of me, nor I of them. I live away from them, because I hate them ; — I hate their envy, and meanness, and falsehood, and selfishness. They have cheated, and wronged, and robbed me ; — the peace I ask, they have no power and no wish to give. Once I lived with them, as you do ; but now I desire of them nothing, and claim only the right of nature, to live and die by myself. Would you deprive me of that ? Begone, I say, and leave me untroubled by thoughts I would only too gladly forget !"

"We are extremely sorry to disturb you," said Atherton. "We were attracted by the beauty of your situation, and meant to rest a while in your house. I regret to learn, from your language, that you are not happy as I could wish, and would be glad to" —

"Unhappy !" he broke in ; "who says I am unhappy ? No doubt you call it happy to grovel in the gutters of the world ! Why should I be unhappy ? Nobody disturbs me, and I live as I please. But your speech rings well, young man, — who are you ? I do not know you ; — this man" — bringing his hand down heavily on Rankin's shoulder — "this man I know. What are you come here for, Rankin ?"

"I'm very glad you remember, me, McQuillen," said Rankin, laughing. "I was afraid, at first, you had forgotten an old acquaintance. I never did you any harm, my good fellow. The fact is, we have been looking after some land here, of Mr. Atherton's. We want to see if anybody else makes claim, — and how our titles stand, in this wild country."

"Wild, hey ? — perhaps you want to see mine. I'll tell you what it is. Look above us, Rankin, — how blue ! Look down, — how green ! I claim from God Almighty, let me tell you — deep as the forest depths, high as heaven ! All I ever loved, is under this sod ; when I am there, let the wolf

howl over it, or men with hearts like wolves! Till then, let me see the man who dares dispute my right!"

"O, we make no such pretence!" answered Rankin; — "in fact, I have always understood you had a deed from Gammon."

"You did, did you? Strong as deviltry can make it, then! Yes, Gammon's the man to give deeds for a *valuable consideration*; and the courts will stand by him, — the law will uphold his title, Rankin, — else, how is it he's rich and I live by the little wit I've got, and a strong arm, Rankin, and a sharp shot? This is my title, — look here, Rankin!" and, seizing him by the arm, he rapidly led him along a path worn in the grass, towards the rear of the house, while Atherton closely followed in their steps.

In half a minute, they had reached a small enclosure, set round with rude pales, and within its bound the raised and rounded turf disclosed the grave, apparently, of a grown person, and by its side another of smaller size. Some wild flowers had been transplanted into the borders; a rose-bush grew at the head of the larger grave, and one or two dark-leaved forest trees hung drooping over the pales.

"This," cried he, pointing with his right hand to the enclosure, "this is my inheritance; of which, I tell you, death — death has given me possession! Let me see who will interfere with my right!"

He leaned, a moment, upon the fence, and then, as if overcome by some sudden revulsion of feeling, turned and moved with hasty strides towards his cabin, which he entered and shut the door. Whether his mind was absolutely deranged beyond that point to which concentrated passion, long indulged and brooded over in solitude, may lead the intellect, it was difficult to judge. His language seemed coherent, though fiery and extravagant, and his action was impetuous and little calculated to inspire confidence in his conduct. At all events, no good purpose could be answered by further conference with

a man subject to such moods, and our travellers turned from this simple and affecting place of solitary burial, in order to seek their horses and proceed at once to the inn. But they were surprised to perceive, as they turned, that McQuillen had left his cabin, and was moving quickly down the path, at some distance in front of them, with a gun in his hand, and an immense black Newfoundland dog gambolling in advance.

“By Heaven! he means mischief,” said Rankin. “He has got possession of our only road, and is going to take to the woods and lie in ambush for us like an Indian.”

“I trust he has only started on some gunning excursion,” replied Atherton; “but no doubt we had better be mounted and away. Do you know anything of his real history, Mr. Rankin?”

“Not much; I have heard he was a person of more education than is common in these parts; but it’s long since I’ve seen him, and I had forgotten all about anything particular till he took us to see those graves; and then I remembered some story, of his being turned off a place he had, rather harshly, in bad weather, and losing his wife and child. She was said to be quite a beauty, and a good deal above the country girls hereabouts. But he has lived a strange sort of life ever since. I have heard of his going into the lumbermen’s camps, sometimes, and helping when they had trouble; but he lives mostly by himself, and easily raises what he wants, and now and then hunts for game.”

“He is a desperate fellow to meet with a gun in his hand, Mr. Rankin, and we without weapons,” said Atherton, as they reached their horses.

“O, my dear sir, I never travel without pistols! They’re sometimes convenient,” replied Rankin, taking a pair from his saddle-bags. “I’ll divide our artillery with you,” offering one to his companion.

“No, I think I’ll leave them with you, and trust to pacific measures,” said Atherton, as they mounted and moved on as briskly as the nature of the path would permit. It was

no great distance through the wood to the drift-way of which we have before spoken, into which the bridle-path descended by a slope beneath quite a high bank. As they approached, a growl from this bank showed them the dog, lying at length, with his head upon his paws, from which attitude he arose as they came nearer; and at the top of the descent to the open way stood McQuillen himself, so as entirely to obstruct the road. Indeed, there was scarcely room here for the travellers to ride abreast. The looks of McQuillen, it must be confessed, were rather lowering. He was drawn up to his full height; his gun rested upon the ground, and with outstretched arm his hand grasped it near the muzzle.

“You came upon my premises without leave from me,” said he; “that is easier than to go off. I don’t like trespassers, and here I make the laws. You are the people who break them.”

“I beg your pardon, Mr. McQuillen,” said Atherton coolly, and humoring him; “it is hardly a trespass to ride over an open path to make a civil call. The laws of your kingdom cannot surely be so strict as that.”

McQuillen eyed the young man with a somewhat doubtful expression.

“I don’t know you, sir,” said he, “nor what your business here is. I don’t believe Rankin came all the way up here just to make a civil call” (rather sneeringly). “I do know he’s a *civil* officer, or used to be, and I believe he’s got some process against my farm; and I mean to understand this before you leave the spot, or I’ll know the reason why!”

“Come, come, McQuillen!” cried Rankin, “this is nonsense. Don’t attempt to obstruct the road, man!”

“Move at your peril!” said McQuillen, in a deep and passionate voice. The dog, in the mean time, had jumped into the road, and, roused, by his master’s excited tone, seemed just about to spring.

“This is insufferable!” said Atherton, who was slightly in advance. “I am here on my own business. We will see if we are to be stopped. Stand out of the way, McQuillen!” and at the same time pressed his horse forward. The dog instantly made a fierce spring at the horse’s head, which the animal avoided by rearing. Rankin as instantly levelled his pistol and drew the trigger, and the ball taking effect in his head, poor Stornor lay stretched struggling at their feet. At the same moment, McQuillen raised his gun and fired; but perhaps the fate of his canine friend partially distracted his attention, for his aim was rather wavering, and the ball passed through Rankin’s hat without injuring him. In an instant he had clubbed his rifle, and dashing at Atherton, whose horse was just upon him, struck him a quick and strong blow upon the head, under which our poor friend reeled in his saddle and fell heavily upon the turf.

“Scoundrel!” cried Rankin. — “You have killed a man worth a thousand of you!” and, without waiting to draw his other pistol, he lifted his heavy riding-whip, and, suddenly wheeling his horse towards McQuillen, he gave the animal the spur. The horse bounded forward, but McQuillen actively evaded his charge, and, catching by the projecting roots of a tree, swung himself up the bank, rushed into the thicket, and disappeared with a wild shout. It was in vain to fire after, or to pursue him there; and Rankin, springing from the saddle, and ascertaining by the distant crash of the bushes that McQuillen was really retreating, proceeded to attend to his unfortunate companion.

Atherton lay without apparent sense or motion. Rankin brought water in his hat from a pool close at hand, and dashed it in his face, and lifted his head upon his knees. George very soon opened his eyes, and put his hand to his forehead. His companion at once held to his lips a cup, procured from the saddle-bags, containing brandy, which Major Redfield, at the tavern that morning, had pronounced “a capital article,”

mixed with a due proportion of water; and, to Rankin's delight, George was soon able to sit upright and to declare that he was not, as he believed, seriously injured. After resting a while, by Rankin's recommendation, that gentleman proceeded to catch Atherton's horse, which had started off in the *melée*, but soon came to a stand, and was now quietly cropping the herbage at no great distance. Binding a handkerchief round Atherton's head, from which considerable blood had flowed, and which a strong hat undoubtedly had protected a good deal, the travellers remounted. It was necessary at first for Rankin to hold Atherton upon his saddle, so weak had he become; but, by moving slowly forward, and occasionally dismounting for rest, they at length reached the high-road, and finally, after some hours, the hospitable house of Major Redfield.

"Lord bless me!" cried the major, "what is the matter?" Rankin gave him a rapid account of their adventure. "You don't say so! Shot by that rascally fellow, who never comes over here! I don't wonder at it. Let the poor young man lie down on the sofa. Lucky the doctor's here, — always stops here about this hour. Where is the doctor? — out in the shed, getting his sulky" (looking out of the window). "Doctor, doctor! here's a patient, after all; here's a young man shot out in the woods by that McQuillen. I always thought some mischief would come of him."

The physician, who was one of those country-doctors, whose hard practice calls them to make extensive and daily rounds, and who usually pulled up at Major Redfield's house every day, to hear and communicate the news, and who was really a person of a good deal of skill and experience, hastily entered the apartment and carefully examined the condition of his patient. He pronounced no bone broken, but recommended rest and light food, and thought that his hurt need not delay his journey longer than the following day.

"You have come off cheap," said he, "Mr. Atherton; no

doubt your hat saved your head ; but this man, McQuillen, can strike a terrible hard blow. I don't see how he missed doing you more injury ; but you seem to have an excellent constitution, and with proper care you 'll soon come round as bright as ever."

The prognostication of the doctor was substantially correct. A good night's rest proved a wonderful restorative. Yet it was not until the second succeeding day that Atherton, still a good deal enfeebled, and presenting a rather ghastly appearance, felt himself able to proceed upon his homeward journey ; and even then, only by easier stages, and after the lapse of several days more than the upward journey had required, did he eventually reach the hospitable house of Mr. Rutledge. His adventure in the woods secured him, of course, the ready sympathy of that excellent gentleman and his good lady, who would have detained him at their home for that refreshment which they alleged he must need ; but Atherton was now too impatient for Eastford to brook further delay. Indeed, little was needed ; for Mr. May's letter, received during his absence, urged the immediate sale of the property, and Mr. Rutledge had found a suitable purchaser willing to take it at a fair price, with all its liabilities and incumbrances, as well as its privileges and appurtenances. This business, therefore, was speedily adjusted, and, bidding adieu to his eastern friends, after a journey as rapid as the mail-coach could make it, our young traveller stood once more by his father's hearth, and was clasped in those heartfelt embraces, which life affords us only at home.

We shall not attempt to describe the meeting, — its love, its interest, its sympathy, its gentle alarm (for he was still pale and wore a bandage upon his head), its congratulations, its pride, its happiness in the safe return of an only beloved son to the arms of a father, a mother and a sister, O, how dearly loved !

And yet there was another, — seen before he slept. Will not

absence, which evidently had only tested and exalted his truth ; will not the pale face of George Atherton, — for, thank Heaven ! suffering, real suffering, will melt a true woman's heart, — will not these touch her soul to the sweet issues of human pity and love ? Will not Mary partake of some part of that simple but dear enthusiasm of Alice, which had now converted her brother, in her imagination, into half a hero ? We really abate the one-half ourselves, in order to save that sweet and lovely girl from the senseless ridicule of an unheroic, and, therefore, an unfeeling age. *Nous verrons.*

27*

CHAPTER XXX.

“ Our revels now are ended ; these our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air.”

TEMPEST.

“ Thou, who wast constant in our ills, be joyful in our joy ! ”

MACAULAY.

ATHERTON had been absent from home so long, that really the summer was almost run away, upon his return. And when we state that his recovery of health and strength was extremely rapid, we need not assure our fair readers, that he was prosperous in the lawful undertaking of Love; for we conceive that ill success, in this respect, might have seriously affected his spirits, and consequently his health. Indeed, we confess ourselves believers in love, — not that weak, diluted, wishy-washy, milk and water potation, which a large proportion of respectable people sip lukewarm, and smack their lips, and really believe to be the genuine article. In regard to this, the world is right. Nobody ever sickened or died of it. This dose, we make no question, may always be taken “ without interfering with the ordinary avocations,” and may be left off, at any time, without serious inconvenience. But there is another and a deeper feeling, of which such persons know little or nothing, able “ to subdue the cheek,” to fill and control the heart, and which, if it does not absorb the sources of hope, and kill the life, makes out of human beings those nobler creatures, whose thoughts and example save the world from infinite degradation.

There is no doubt that Atherton's ambition had been more or less gratified, by the successful result of his expedition into Maine; so that his modest appreciation of himself—that "proud humility," which many mistook for coldness and even *hauteur*—received a slight fillip from the new sense of having begun to be really useful in his day and generation. In a word, he began, perhaps, to feel more sensibly the full force of that great sentiment, which the Greek philosopher put forth as his standing maxim, namely, "Above all things reverence thyself," and which a much greater man has so beautifully paraphrased and improved, —

"This above all, to thine own self *be true*,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

On the other hand, Mary May, who had grown up in the midst of the most affectionate relations with George Atherton, and whose feelings were none the less strong, that they had scarcely been defined even by her own secret thoughts, had undoubtedly felt her womanly pride touched and wounded, when she perceived that the ripening flower of her heart was likely to be blighted by a chilling and untimely frost.

That a brief and frank conference would soon melt such hearts into one, there can be no doubt; and we rejoice to say that a result so truly happy soon came to pass. Mr. May cordially entered into this arrangement, when it was formally announced to him, without any affected unconsciousness of Mary's noble character, and congratulated Atherton upon the promising prospect before him.

"We will say nothing of Mary, my dear boy," he observed. "It has always seemed to be a thing fated, and we are only too happy that it is so; but this property of Mary's, which you have secured by your exertions, will give you really a very handsome start in life."

"Indeed, sir," said George, surprised and much confused,

“I had no idea of that. I had no thought that Mary had any particular interest in this property, except as your child. I had only expected to do as well as I could with my usual share of the ordinary profits of business in the office.”

“Yes, yes, I have no doubt; but in truth, as to this very handsome sum of money, which really is, in some sort, the spoils of your own bow and spear, I have never depended upon it at all, and have no need of it. My wife’s father conveyed the land to her, before marriage, and it has just turned up, at this late day, in season to prove a handsome dowry for her daughter; — so say no more about it, my dear fellow, but consider that matter settled.”

Indeed, this turn of affairs, as propitious as it was unexpected, seemed to remove all obstacles to a speedy union; and, as the marriage of Alice had been fixed upon for October, now close at hand, it was concluded, with universal consent, that the two weddings should be celebrated on the same day.

To Aunt Sibyl this happy consummation of events afforded unalloyed pleasure. She had always found her chief earthly delight in the happiness of others. These young hearts she had watched from infancy, and had aided not a little to cultivate and raise; and with those whom she loved so dearly, many happy meetings, during the now brief hours of courtship which remained, and many sage consultations, took place at her house. It was from her Atherton had learned, in a little private conference one morning, that Mary had seemed to suffer a good deal in her health, some months before, — indeed, so much as to occasion her affectionate relative much alarm; and it was in reference to this development, as we suppose, that he sang that song, at her house, a few evenings before the marriage, to which Aunt Sibyl listened with such gentle and sober pleasure; while Mary hung down her head, though she looked then like anything but a fading flower, if a good rosy color, somewhat heightened under the circumstances, afford any reliable indication.

"SONG.

- "With you, methinks, my every hour
Of every day and every night,
Like creature winged from flower to flower,
Were only flown for fresh delight.
- "Your bloom, — not so the morning rose
Embosomed in her blushes lies,
Nor deep through midnight's azure glows
A beam to match those love-lit eyes.
- "And sweet as song, that fairs remote,
Of evening's home-returning bird,
Or softer wind-harp's airy note,
Breathes to my soul your whispered word.
- "Yet, like some pledge of priceless worth,
I hold you in my bosom's shrine,
And deem it joy too dear for earth,
Whene'er I dare to call you mine.
- "For on your charms I feel impressed
What earthly charms, alas, must prove! —
And, folded to a human breast,
Almost divine becomes my love.
- "And such a love for mortal thing,
So sweet, but O, so insecure!
Broods like an angel o'er the spring,
And keeps the troubled waters pure."

And now we have reached the closing season of the year. The viewless and silent boundaries of summer are behind our advancing steps. The revolution of the circling months has presented us with the same infinite variety of mysterious developments. Once more, beneath their annual course, has winter opened his icy arms and released us from his cold embrace. Once more our brows have bathed in the gales of spring. Once more, we have sought the cooler shade, beneath the blazing eye of June; and now, again we stand amidst the harvest-hour. Under the order of a beneficent Providence, the annual hopes of man have been crowned with their

never-failing fulfilment. The fields, which so lately cheered our eyes with hues more rich and precious than the wroughten gold, have yielded their luxuriant treasures to our teeming stores. Of all the gay and gallant train, which, in the opening hour of Nature,

“ Do paint the meadows with delight,”

but a scattered few are lingering on the confines of the closing season. The very leaves which, but yesterday, had wrapped the forest in its fresh and verdant mantle above our heads, are dropping from their parent stems, to lie strown and withered beneath our feet. The airs of heaven, that but lately whispered to us, in soft and soothing tones, of every fragrant and lovely thing, are sighing, with mournful voices, along the naked ground. The insect tribe, that sported in the glittering beams, radiant with a thousand brilliant hues, are seeking their wintry resting-places, and preparing for their long repose. And those gentler and brighter creatures, that filled the groves and living air with melodious warblings, are spreading their buoyant sails, to find another summer beneath the skies of some more genial clime.

And yet, with anything but sorrow, do we look upon the fading skirts of the departing year. If every returning season possesses its own peculiar charms, surely in this we might find the thoughts and suggestions, most fitted to excite the nobler emotions of our hearts. Of all the vicissitudes of Nature, there is no one which presents her in an aspect so attractive. Not every budding promise of Spring, nor all the variegated vesture of gorgeous and glowing Summer, can inspire us rightfully with an equal delight. From hill, and meadow, and plain, now so bare and silent, we have gathered the reward of all our toil. The yellow stubble rises upon our view, in testimony of our garnered hopes. We are filled with food convenient for us, and Nature herself puts on triumphal garments, to unite with us in celebrating the hour of plenty

and joy. The secret flood, which pierces the fibres of the living wood, has robed its drapery in gold and purple and a mingled garniture of every dazzling and glorious hue. The clear and frosty air folds us, like a mantle, in its elastic embrace. Like the welcome grasp of some friendly arm, it seems almost to support our drooping steps, and, with its animating breath, awakens the sluggish current in our veins, and nerves us to meet the ruder touches of the storm.

The fields, indeed, have lost their former freshness. They are no longer clad in the greenness of their early verdure. The scorching sun of many a livelong summer's day has sucked the vital moisture from herb and spiry grass, and all the sweet, innumerable company of summer flowers have long since faded upon their withered stalks.

And yet those very elements of the living atmosphere, which forever fling along the western autumnal horizon those richest of all magnificent and mingled dyes, melting, as the twilight hour draws on, into one deep and fervid blaze of glowing golden light, call also from the bosom of mother Earth the perfection of whatever is brightest in her ever-varying hues. Of all the lovely tints, which Nature has prepared to refresh the eye and to cultivate the imagination of her children, she offers nothing more lovely than the gorgeous spike of flowering gold, which droops in luxuriant beauty by the rustic roadside, or that bright flower, which hangs its scarlet crown by the secret margin of some forest-brook.

As if our common mother, about to retire into her inner chambers for a season, yet loth that her children should lose the remembrance of perfections that bind them to her in reverence and love, had arrayed herself for her departure in her most costly apparel; to fix within our souls one last indelible impression of her maternal loveliness and kindly care, until she could greet us once again, led on by the rejoicing spring, heralded by opening flowers, wreathed with returning smiles!

What we mean to observe is, that our autumnal season in New England certainly is by far the most agreeable portion of the year. Nothing can surpass the purity of our October skies. And this same clearness and elasticity of the atmosphere often lasts through the month of November, so gloomy elsewhere, and sometimes far down the wintry domain of December itself. And when the fallen leaves lie scattered in gay but natural confusion, and of variegated and mingling hues, no art of man has ever carpeted the floors of palaces with richer colors, as the sun glances upon the gorgeous covering which strews the forest-walk.

It was at this fitting period of the ripened and mellow year, that the Reverend John Atherton united his son to the wife of his choice, and his daughter to the husband of her youth, in the holy bonds of matrimony. We have no intention of describing the wedding. After the fashion of Presbyterianism, and, shall we add, of good taste? it was strictly private. For we should as soon think of asking the world to be present at our first passionate declaration of love, as to summon it in, with its impertinent smiles or tears, to witness the celebration of our own personal nuptials. Soon after the fervent and heartfelt blessing had been pronounced, it was necessary for Shirland and Alice to take their departure, in order that they might reach, seasonably, the pretty cottage they were to inhabit in the neighborhood of Oxton, with glad promises to her mother and her other dear friends of a speedy visit *home*. The presents of the bride we are unable at present to recapitulate. This we do know, however, that in one of her trunks lay, neatly folded, a bedquilt "of divers colors of needlework," curiously contrived in squares, and wrought by the kind and industrious hands of Aunt Sibyl; and that another, of a precisely similar description, then and long afterwards continued to cover the second-best bed in the pleasant "garden-house" at Eastford, to which George Atherton conducted his lovely bride.

We do not propose, in this volume, to enter into any further details of the lives and fortunes of these young people, which, it must be confessed, were likely to prove as happy as mutual love and sound principle could make them, and the condition of human affairs permits.

Of some of our other characters, it is proper we should afford the friendly reader such reliable information as we have been able to obtain.

Place aux dames! This is the law of chivalry; and whatever may be the faults of the New England character, want of gallantry to the sex is not one of them. And first, of our excellent friend, Miss Sibyl Dudley. She is still the object of an affection, bordering on veneration, to a select circle of estimable friends, including not a few of the more promising of the rising generation. We called upon her, of course, at our last visit to Eastford. Time had gently touched the pleasant face of the delightful old lady with an influence "frosty but kindly." In her serene eye, age had only softened and sanctified that light of heaven, which was vouchsafed to the innocence of her unclouded youth. She was sitting at her western window, upon which the setting sun threw a pleasing and chequered light, through a trellised bower of honeysuckles and roses. Her knitting-work lay upon her open Bible, on the little table near her arm-chair. A cross-handled cane, standing conveniently near, we regretted to learn, was necessary to assist her steps, under a recent attack of rheumatism, consequent, as some said, upon the indulgence of her gardening habits, during a long spell of extremely damp weather. We were favored with a too brief, but, we trust, edifying discourse, with our old friend, upon the substantial enjoyment which may, after all, be secured in this vale of tears, by persons of true feeling and sound, controlling rectitude of purpose.

As for Miss Poulter, she caught a terrible cold by running round, early and late, to communicate and discuss the extraor-

dinary event of two weddings in one house, "on the same day, dear, and out of the same family!" Black Nance pronounced this a judgment upon her,—an opinion which Mr. Atherton reproved; alleging that it is impossible for us, in our weakness, to judge of the causes and reasons of the misfortunes or afflictions of our fellow-creatures; and that we are incapable of making any legitimate application in regard to matters far above our reach; that experience as well as Scripture may convince us, that the prosperity of the wicked is often their greatest curse, while affliction is frequently a most merciful dispensation; repressing that pride of heart, which would lead many into presumptuous sin, and moulding us by a chastening hand, and so forming the character to virtue.

Nance admitted the soundness of these views of the minister, so far as she understood them; but "Lor," said she, "guess got too much old Adam in dis colored pusson."

After a very severe time of it, Miss Poulter slowly recovered, and, upon one of his occasional visits to Eastford, it was thought that Mr. Prior Date was rather making up to her. But to the credit of that discreet lady be it said, she would have nothing whatever to do with him, on the score of his infidel notions, more especially,—at least, they never got further than the announcement of these. This argued well for her virtuous resolution, for the temptation was certainly strong; since it is not likely she had enjoyed many opportunities of preferment in marriage, at least, of late years. But she dismissed Date remorselessly, or, as she put it, "sent him off with a flea in his ear," bitterly inveighing, then and afterwards, against the sex of the mother who bore him.

Nance herself, with a tenacity of life of which her race has afforded many remarkable examples, at a very advanced age, continued to keep up, as far as possible, the routine of her visits, duties and labors, and, we have no doubt, did a great deal of good in her humble way, and no mischief, that we were ever aware of. The younger folks, whom her ap-

pearance and demeanor affected with childish apprehensions, in her earlier days, got over their terrors, as they grew up. As she has become older, her venerable features are handsomely set off by profuse locks of silver gray, and her whole figure presents a highly respectable appearance. The expression of her intelligent face has softened very much with advancing years, and a really good heart has left stamped on her countenance the signet of amiable feelings, as the wilder passions of her youth have decayed. The striplings of succeeding generations, however, have continued to hold her in an awe which, whether absolutely wholesome or otherwise, we should be glad to see substituted for that want of reverence, too frequently manifested towards the aged by the youngsters of our times.

Miss Elizabeth Flyter — who would believe it? — has consented to become Mrs. Cobstalk, failing her former predilection for George Atherton. The charms of Miss Flyter made an indelible impression on the heart of Cobstalk, at the picnic which we have formerly described. Soon after the completion of his legal studies, that young gentleman commenced the practice of his profession at Oxton, where his shrewdness and perseverance soon put him in the way of success. And, in our opinion, Miss Flyter acted wisely, in accepting a man of good sense, who really loved her, though of unpolished manners (which are gradually losing much of their uncouthness), to a mere fop, like Simcox, who had nothing but fashionable manners to recommend him. Bundle's advances, it appeared, came to nothing. From their style of life, we infer that the fortune of Mrs. Cobstalk was large, as might be anticipated from the penurious habits of her father. For old Mr. Flyter came, at last, to that small possession, (carrying nothing with him) which at length awaits both rich and poor. He practised upon his "rule" to the last; and we had the satisfaction of reading upon his handsome monument, not long since, an inscription, all the letters of which were

gilded, and which was really generous, — the only generous thing, we may say, with which his name was ever associated, — pronouncing him “a man of the strictest integrity and consistency of life.” Part of it was in the Latin language, of which the respected defunct never knew a word, and began, “Integer vitæ scelerisque purus.”

A comfortable provision was made by Atherton for Peggy Arey.

The last we heard of Date, he had become deeply interested in the ministrations of the Rev. Mr. Thumper, a gentleman who emphatically sat “in the seat of the scornful,” and entertained a select but numerous audience, every Sunday, with furious outpourings of infidelity, blasphemy and sedition, — which are but other words for “blindness of heart, pride, vain-glory and hypocrisy; envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness;” which they seemed to love, and which may, for aught we know, be grateful to the natural man, and which promised to be of great service in helping them down the easy road to perdition.

The long and useful life of Dr. Walton closed soon after the birth of his first great-grandchild, at Eastford; but not before the curly-headed urchin had been often taken to the residence of the benevolent old man, and held in his feeble arms; an operation which its mother watched with true maternal anxiety.

When we made our call, beforementioned, on good Miss Dudley, we had the pleasure also of visiting the elder branches of the Athertons and the Mays; and it was delightful to witness the peaceable course of their lives, gliding onwards in calm contentment and rational happiness, amidst the endearments of mutual friendship and love. Undisturbed by the follies and unsophisticated by the corruptions of the world, it was evident their hearts were *at home*; and such hearts never grow old.

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As a specimen of the communications received from the above sources, the following extracts are given:—

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I know of no grammar published in this country, which promises to answer so well the purposes of elementary classical instruction, and shall be glad to see it introduced into our best schools. — *Mr. Charles K. Dillaway, Master of the Public Latin School, Boston.*

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I can with much pleasure say that your Grammar seems to me much better adapted to the present condition and wants of our schools than any one with which I am acquainted, and to supply that which has long been wanted — a good Latin grammar for common use. — *Mr. F. Gardner, one of the Masters Boston Lat. Sch.*

The Latin Grammar of Andrews and Stoddard is deserving, in my opinion, of the approbation which so many of our ablest teachers have bestowed upon it. It is believed that, of all the grammars at present before the public, this has greatly the advantage, in regard both to the excellence of its arrangement, and the accuracy and copiousness of its information; and it is earnestly hoped that its merits will procure for it that general favor and use to which it is entitled. — *H. B. Hackett, Professor of Biblical Literature in Newton Theol. Sem.*

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